# The War and Preaching.

By John Kelman, D.D.

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The war and preaching

# THE WAR AND PREACHING

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THOUGHTS ON THINGS ETERNAL
SALTED WITH FIRE
AMONG FAMOUS BOOKS

THE FORTY-FIFTH SERIES OF THE LYMAN BEECHER LECTURESHIP
ON PREACHING, YALE UNIVERSITY

# THE WAR AND PREACHING

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TO

Dr. ALEXANDER WHYTE

IN DEEP REVERENCE AND
AFFECTION

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## *LECTURE I*

### *Introductory—Reality*

IT would be impossible too strongly to express my sense of the honour which this University has conferred upon me in inviting me to deliver these lectures here. The lectures themselves must be my attempt at acknowledgment, and I am deeply conscious how inadequately that attempt has been achieved. Yet it comforts me to remember that I shall not speak as a stranger among you, but as one of yourselves, and that your judgment will be accordingly tempered. I shall never forget the Graduation Day of 1917. I had come to you from the front in Flanders, and from a long tour of lecturing on the subject of the war in the Middle West and in the Southern States of America. I had seen your great nation passing through the most critical and the most fateful hour of all its history. It seemed to me that day, when through your graciousness I sat among you as a graduate of Yale, that I felt the mighty heart-throb with which America rose and plunged into the most stupendous war of history. And in that hour I was not only among you, I was one of you,—*et ego in Arcadia,*—and the heart-throb was within my own breast as it was in yours.

When one remembers that more than forty courses of these lectures have already been delivered and published, it would seem that there can be nothing left to say. Yet I take it that the thing which you mainly desire is the result of the lecturer's own experience, what he personally has found preaching to be. Each man sees and faces the world anew, and finds something in it for himself.

Of course he will enlarge that personal experience with the results of his studies of men and books, and of his general outlook and his knowledge of the world. Yet it will be mainly his own experience to which he will turn. That must be a solemn adventure for a man's own soul, like the adventure of searching back through the arranged and numbered sermons on his shelves. He will feel the mystery of it all. Those *lacunæ,* dead periods when his preaching for a time had lost its force; those recoveries, in which again it became alive and struck home; those and a thousand thronging memories that gather round individual sermons, not easily attributable to any causes which he can discover, will sufficiently impress upon him the conviction that a lifetime devoted to preaching is a very grave and formidable enterprise.

Yet I do not think that a preacher's diary can be all that is expected in such lectures as these. A mere record of his own experiences, annotated with counsels as to the execution of sermon-work and other parts of the minister's duties, is not enough. From the manifold detail of past experience, certain leading principles ought to be evolved, and these must result in something in the nature of a theory of preaching, of which the course of lectures will be the exposition.

No study could be more interesting, and few perhaps more profitable, than an historical review of the great preachers of the past.[1] I do not mean so much an account of the peculiar personal qualities of their genius, nor of the methods which they adopted, as of their various mes-

[1] In his volume on *The Christian Minister and his Duties,* the late Principal Oswald Dykes of Cambridge has presented to the modern reader the results of his long lifetime of study and experience. The book is characterised on the one hand by a rare spiritual understanding of the devotional life; on the other hand by its constant sense of history, in virtue of which every point in regard either to principle or detail leads back to its origins in the past.

sages considered particularly in relation to the spirit and the problems of their times. Chrysostom, Savonarola, Knox, Goodwin, Fénelon—these and countless other faces look out upon us from the august shadow of the Cloud of Witnesses. Some of them sent forth a timeless voice, unrelated to the voices of their generation, aloof and ultramundane. Others spoke to the spirit of their generation, loving the human life around them, and understanding well its hidden springs of action and of thought. The effect of such a study on the whole must be a realisation of the infinite variety of worthy and successful preaching. The Church of the Firstborn has room within it for all the groups into which His brethren have gathered, and its preaching has an equal latitude. There will be, in all true preaching, a certain fixed and uncompromising element, but history has conclusively proved that this is not enough. It shows preaching to be a plastic force, which has always taken on new character corresponding to the changing events and periods of time, and answering to the infinite variety of the phases of human life and need.

To-day, more than in any day in the past, the promise is being fulfilled, "Behold, I make all things new." Nations are being born in a day, and the world reborn. The watchwords of Science, of Social Reform, of every department of human activity and interest, grow obsolete almost before they have become familiar. The preaching that is to be effective in such an age must be sensitive to the metamorphoses of the swiftly-changing time. It should not be a cautious after-statement, when safety has been already guaranteed. It must, if it is to be taken seriously as a living force, be adventurous and daring.

Turning from the great and noble history of preaching in the past to the conditions of the present day, one is met by the startling commonplace expressed in the phrase, "The failure of the Church." This is one of those unthinking verdicts which are frequently pronounced upon

great institutions by people whose equipment for pronouncing judgment is singularly slender. You will generally find that the less a critic knows about the Church, the more confident he is in his assertion that she has failed. It is never wise to accept a sweeping condemnation without careful scrutiny. Such scrutiny will, I believe, reveal the fact that the Church of to-day stands for very much more reality and value than its enemies hope and its timid friends fear. As a defence against temptation, a refuge from sorrow, a centre of guidance and inspiration, a fostering source of private and public ideals which are the most potent of all human forces, I do not know a land in which the Church has failed. Certainly in very many communities it exerts a quiet influence which ranks among the most powerful of the time. Working, as it does, from the individual out upon society, from the few to the many, this influence remains for the most part hidden, and may be very easily overlooked and discounted. But it may be confidently affirmed that the life of a churchless land would be unspeakably less secure against public dangers, and poorer in intellectual, moral, and spiritual ideals, than that of a land secretly fortified and enriched by the ministrations of the Church in the midst of it.

Yet facts and figures show but too clearly how much there is to be said on the side of hostile critics of the Church. Investigations which have been made in the British army show that only some 25 per cent. of our soldiers were in any living relation with the Church. This is a very serious state of matters, and it shows a condition of society in the strongest possible contrast to that of any Christian country in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Then, the Church spake with authority, and in the dogmatic certainty of her preaching there was no thought of compromise with doubt. Now, the spirit of man's common thought has changed, and the intellect of large numbers of men is not commanded by her reasonings, nor

is their conscience convinced that her denunciations are authentic thunder.

Yet it is easy to exaggerate the sinister meaning of the fact that so large a proportion of the population does not attend any place of worship. In the first place, it is simply due to the relaxation of a discipline which depended for its authority upon the temporary phenomenon of secular power in the Church. When that disappeared, every man went unto his own place. At the period when the Church, like the godparents in the Baptism Service, "called upon them to hear sermons," there must have been multitudes of churchgoing men and women who in their hearts were non-churchgoing. The compulsion rested more or less upon the fallacy that churchgoing is a virtue in its own right, by whose observance humanity acquires merit, and by whose neglect it incurs guilt. It is obvious, however, that there is no such intrinsic virtue in going to church, or guilt in staying away. The question which must decide the moral or religious quality of the habit is, What do people go to church for? If it is only to keep up an appearance of respectability or to avoid the censure of ecclesiastics, it would be actually more creditable to renounce the practice. If it is to satisfy a real, as contrasted with a merely formal and artificial need, then it is a practice to be commended now as of old. Certainly the change has been a wholesome one to this extent, that the desires and inclinations of men have come out into the open. We know, better than our fathers did, who those are who desire what the Church has to offer them, and who the others are. That change has at least cleared the situation and simplified it.

Further, when we come into intimate contact with the non-churchgoing, we make interesting discoveries. This aspect of the war should be fully realised. There, for once, the ex-convict and the divinity student lived side by side—an excellent thing for the divinity student. For

once, at last, the opportunity came for the Church to get into close contact and acquaintance with several millions of young men who were formerly quite outside her pale, and to whom she had no possibility of access. Home mission work, at the best, had only been able to touch the fringe of the problem. Then, in resting camps at the base, and in the dugouts and trenches of the line, ministers of the various churches were in close and constant fellowship with the men. They are unanimous in their report. Those who have hitherto drifted past the Church are not essentially bad men. In respect of all the distinctively soldierly virtues—courage, discipline, endurance—it would be impossible to draw any clear line between them and the churchgoing. In respect of general character and quality of spirit, while the fortifying and inspiring influence of the Church is more clearly perceptible, it remains true that in the vast majority of cases it would be impossible to conclude that the reason for their aloofness from the Church is to be found in any aversion from goodness or deliberate choice of evil ways. The simple truth of the matter is that the reason why these men do not go to church is that they are not interested in the things which the Church provides. They are at one with the Church in many of her teachings, but it seems to them that she expresses those teachings in a different language from their own, different not only in words but in habits of thought as well. To them the Church is a great organised unreality. They neither desire it nor do they hate it. They simply leave it alone as a thing entirely out of their line.

In this word *reality* we find the root of the matter. Take these two curious instances, gathered at random. Alison the historian describes the English clergyman of the eighteenth century as "sharing the hospitality of the rich in his prosperity, and visiting the poor in his affliction." The other is from a deathbed scene told by Galt

in his inimitable way, in *Annals of the Parish:* "I wish you would put in a word for me, Doctor, for you know that in these times it is the duty of every good subject to die a Christian." The minister prays, in his accustomed formulæ, using phrases about God's "chastening hand, which was laid so heavily upon His aged servant." The dying man interrupts him: "None of that stuff, Doctor; you know I cannot call myself a Christian."

These are two heart-searching quotations for ministers, all the more so because they are so blameless and natural, and the unreality in them is so naïvely unconscious. But the second quotation is especially significant. It is evidently the story of a good and pious man, but a man whom conventional language has robbed of reality. It is but one of many such types. Some men's preaching, evenly edifying to the mediocrity of the few who know and like the time-honoured routine of religious vocabulary, is to all others as meaningless as it is wearisome. Others have cultivated a habit of familiar speech in unfamiliar regions, revelling in highly picturesque descriptions of the heaven beyond the grave, or in exaggerated accounts of spiritual experience on this side of it. Others, steeped in abstract theological study, have rendered themselves unable to describe the most ordinary facts in any but the most extraordinary language. Others restrict their preaching to the expounding of some regulation formula of which they arrogantly speak as "The Truth." Others seek out for themselves generalities to which no one will be able to take exception, out of cowardly deference to that terrifying bogy, "the man on the street." If they only knew it, the man on the street is uncommonly like other people, and he neither understands such colourless platitudes nor does he like them. Others are the victims of philosophy, and cannot be induced to leave its terminology behind them when they enter the pulpit.[1]

[1] To young preachers, fresh from college, philosophy is peculi-

However it may have arisen, there can be no question as to the fact that preaching has suffered to a most lamentable extent by the habitual assumption of a pulpit manner which is felt by the hearers to be unreal. Against this habit I wish to enter my strong protest. The formality of language and of bearing—sometimes even of voice—which is often assumed by the preacher under the delusion that it is the suitable and proper thing for preaching, is not real dignity and it is not impressive solemnity. It is, as Sam Jones has called it, simply "the starch of the shroud" which enwraps a dead message. For this it is not necessary that the preacher should be talking in the language of a past generation. That, indeed, is sometimes accountable for his ineffectiveness. Yet words which were spoken to a generation now long dead may retain their life, if they were ever vigorously alive. I remember once making an experiment with this. There is a sermon on "God the Lord is a sun and shield," published half a century ago by a distinguished predecessor of my own, of whom I had heard it said that his sermons could not be

iarly apt to be a snare. When such preachers are themselves accredited students of philosophy, it is difficult for them to realise how far apart their favourite studies are from the interest, or even the understanding, of the men and women to whom they preach. M. Anatole France, who insists on this point in many passages, has summed up the popular verdict in one mordant sarcasm: "These untenable propositions, which, however, the philosophic world would easily accept provided they were stated in sufficiently unintelligible language." That is, indeed, no fair statement of the case. Yet that is the point of view of many intelligent people in every congregation. Even the most erudite student of philosophy has to reckon with this fact. As to the use of philosophical terms by preachers who are not erudite philosophers, that dishonest practice has added to the distrust with which ordinary people are apt to receive such preaching. If Johnson was justified by certain pretenders in his famous *dictum* that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel," certainly there are not wanting instances to prove that philosophy may be the *camouflage of a fool.*

preached and would not be listened to to-day. Preaching from the same text, I introduced a page of his book, and it held the congregation listening intently. The real secret lies in expressing oneself so that one's words find an answer in the spirits of the people. Those who fail to arrest attention do so because they are out of touch with facts. Bishop Phillips Brooks has described them in a memorable sentence as "neither high enough to hear the calling of the stars, nor low enough to hear the grumbling of the earthquake." In other words, the preacher must be in touch with either the heights or the depths of his hearers' experience, or at least with some phase of it which they recognise.

This fundamental consideration is the keynote of the present course of lectures. The secret of reality in preaching is intelligibility, and the secret of intelligibility is interest. "Interest," "interesting," are to be understood in their etymological sense—*inter est*—that which is common to speaker and hearer, that which they have between them. Allow me to insist upon this first necessity. It is proclaimed in the wonderful story of Pentecost, though not all readers of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles have noticed it there. In that composite congregation there were four main groups of nationalities. There were those from the far east, oriental mystics from the lands of occult and secret lore; Greeks, with their hereditary philosophic bent of mind; Egyptians, sphinx-like, whose thoughts dwelt solemnly among the dead; Romans, children of the Empire, whose imperial purposes and strivings were intensely alive and rudely practical. They differed utterly in origin and in character. Their differences were not merely a matter of language, but of taste, tradition, and habit of mind. Yet every man of them heard the apostles speak in his own language. The point of the whole story is just this intelligibility. It is not recorded as a mere linguistic phenomenon; it tells of

an intelligible gospel which appeals to men's varied ideas and points of view, which meets their vital needs, and has practical results in their conduct and character.

Too often spirituality is identified with sheer aloofness from the world in which men live. Too often the thought of the Divine Spirit is associated with varieties of religious experience which are wild, extravagant, and abnormal; with emotional excitement rather than with clear thinking; with a feverish state in which the spirit of man lashes out like some untamed creature. Thus the popular idea of the Spirit is of a force essentially marked by *un*-intelligibility. It was this tendency which St. Paul had to combat when he advocated prophecy that was understood, against "tongues" which no man could understand; and when he insisted that the fruits of the Spirit are simple things like love, joy, and peace. The prophet of still more ancient days was behind the great apostle here. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, it was to proclaim beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning—a proclamation surely which every heart of man and woman understands. Above all, Jesus Christ Himself is behind him, for it was the Spirit of truth which He promised to send to men, the Spirit which was to lead them into truth, setting free on earth not ecstatic feeling, but knowledge and insight.

Here, then, in the story of the great gift of the Holy Ghost, the original and authentic note is not that of something occult which everybody was amazed at, but of something intelligible which everybody understood. The Holy Spirit, as here revealed, is just God making Himself intelligible to men, God making men understand Him, God speaking to each man in his own tongue. It is true that emotion frequently accompanies the gift of the Spirit, sometimes intense emotion. There is a certain element of wildness in all great preaching. But it is possible to talk passionately or vehemently and yet to talk sense. The

average man may be carried away by mere eloquence for a moment, but he will ultimately come to distrust the eloquence of those who do not know what they mean, and who cannot let him know what they are talking about.

All this comes back in the end to the supreme demand for reality in preaching. It is demanded of us above all else that we be real men dealing in a real way with real things. The world has been content with conventionality, but it is so no longer. It is swiftly coming to be ready at last to face actual facts instead of living by accepted theories. All the professional conventions, veils that have long hidden reality from men, are being torn down to-day. The days of precedent, prejudice, routine, and formal orthodoxy are over. Men are willing to take religion seriously for the amount of sheer reality that is in it, and not for more. In so far as our language, or our manner, or our subjects, have been professional or artificial, we must change them and be natural. Nay more, some of what we have taken for settled truth, arranged and classified and systematised, may turn out upon severe and candid examination to be mere imagination, corresponding to no existing set of realities which we can actually know. This also must be surrendered, and exchanged for a message with some blood in it, recognisable as a thing humanly true.

The chief cause of unreality along the whole line of human interests or activities lies in one cardinal mistake. It is not conceivable that any man should deliberately say to himself, Go to, let me be unreal, any more than that he should say, Go to, I shall be a hypocrite. Hypocrisy and unreality are subtler in their origins than that. In almost every instance they may be traced simply to the confusion of means with ends, of machinery with the thing which it was invented to produce. In his very remarkable book, *Culture and Anarchy,* Matthew Arnold has enlarged upon this theme with great fertility of illus-

tration and literary power. He has charged the British people with living for such things as money, freedom, and the disestablishment of the Church; and he has pointed out that however admirable these things may be, or may be held to be, yet the true ends of life lie beyond them, and their value is wholly measured by the degree in which they forward these ends. Sweetness and light are the ultimate ends of the human spirit, and wealth and freedom have no value whatever except in so far as they bring us nearer to these ends. In using the disestablishment controversy as a further illustration of a means that may easily be mistaken for an ultimate end, he has pointed out the wider danger which besets the Church in all ages. In one form or other it is the danger of ecclesiasticism, in which men are apt to adopt for the end of their endeavours the mere running of the Church machine, whether in the congregation or in the larger courts of the denomination. In that special department of church work with which we are at present concerned, viz. preaching, the same danger threatens, and it is our greatest danger. Where preachers fail, it is usually due neither to lack of ability, nor of education, nor of genuine desire and purpose to succeed. It is due to some error or confusion as to the end and object of their preaching. For preaching can never be an end in itself. He who aims simply at preaching well, without considering the further object which his preaching is to secure, is *a priori* doomed to failure. His concern is with the machine; but the *raison d'être* of the machine is not its own running, but the thing it is manufacturing.

What then is the object of preaching? What is the product which the pulpit is designed and intended to produce? There are many different kinds of oratory, and the function of each is defined and limited by its own special conditions. The parliamentary orator is not by any means necessarily a great orator in the wider sense.

He has to study on the one hand the effect which his words will have upon the vote at the end of the debate, and on the other hand the education of his constituents or of his party in political principles. The oratory of the bar has a narrower and more immediate object. "A good speech is a good thing," said Daniel O'Connell, "but the verdict is *the* thing." Many a brilliant oration has been a parliamentary failure, and many a case has been lost by a far profounder pleading than that which was required to win it. As in Parliament and in the Law Courts, so in the pulpit, the first condition of success is to see clearly and keep steadily in view the thing the speaker wants to do.

In the main, the objects of preaching are three. They may be roughly stated as Testimony, Education, and Appeal.

By *testimony* I do not mean the popular and personal act, in which it is understood as the preacher's confession of his own religious experience. Dr. Dykes, who always writes from the standpoint of the churchman, defines the art of preaching as "that continuous and public testimony which the Church is always giving, through discourses by her official members, to her own living faith in Christ, as rooted in and sustained by the Word of God."[1] The definition is a weighty one, but it may be misleading. Each individual church has an historical testimony upon which it rose. In protest against what its founders took to be false doctrine, or in the desire to emphasise doctrine which they felt to be neglected or ignored by the already existing churches of their time, they founded their new church upon a certain clearly defined doctrinal basis, of which they thus constituted themselves the champions. Naturally at first, and often throughout the whole course of their existence, these churches feel it incumbent on them to testify to their peculiar tenets. Such testimony

[1] *The Christian Minister and his Duties,* p. 180.

may be invaluable for a time, but not infrequently it outlives its time; and the church, out of a mistaken loyalty, goes on testifying to a generation which is perplexed by new questions and has lost interest in, and need for, the testimony which once was a vital force. A church may in this way become a futile and pathetic voice crying in the wilderness. There is such a thing as being faithful unto death in a disastrous sense, and certainly the ideal of testifying may become a snare to earnest men.

Apart from such special testimonies, with their tendency to grow obsolete and ineffective, there is a danger in accepting testimony as the chief end of preaching. Even when it is understood in a far broader sense than the denominational, when it bears witness to the fundamental truths and great doctrines of the faith, testimony is apt to be an abstract thing. When it is accepted as the main object of preaching, it cannot fail to be in danger of becoming theoretical and arid. The proper object of preaching must be its effect upon living men, and not the proclamation of statements however venerable or however weighty. The force of this is perceived when we recollect the constant movement of thought and the living development of truth, which compel us to regard all creeds, not as final goals at the end of the path to truth, but as milestones which mark the progress of the generations towards a goal still far ahead.

The testimony which Dr. Dykes intends is not, however, in any sense abstract. It is "to her own living faith in Christ" that the Church testifies. This is obviously a matter of experience, but not the restricted experience of any individual or group. Behind the experience of any given preacher and congregation, there stand the great facts of the Christian revelation—the facts of the Living God, revealed in Jesus Christ, and borne witness to by the Holy Spirit in the Church throughout the ages. Our individual experience can appropriate but a very little part

of all that boundless wealth of divine reality. St. Paul's and the apostles' experience lies behind us, dwarfing all that we can ever hope to attain. Behind all is the experience of Jesus Christ Himself—the perfect and final revelation of the divine life to men. We preach Christ in all His fullness—an infinitely greater message than merely our own detailed experience of Christ. In Him we are literally made partakers of the divine life, and attain to the new experience of oneness with the boundless life of God. Testimony, in this great sense, may well be accepted as the comprehensive and proper object of all Christian preaching. But then such testimony is not abstract, but in the strictest sense experiential. Testimony in the lesser senses which we have indicated is a real and legitimate object of preaching; but it is only one of several such objects, and its importance and its claim are confined within narrow limits.

For *education* as the object of preaching, much may be said. No one will deny the value or the necessity of it, for the ignorance of the average hearer concerning religious truth is beyond all belief. It is this colossal ignorance, even in otherwise well-educated people, which constitutes the chief difficulty of the modern pulpit. As an aim for the preacher, education has high sanctions. When Christ promised that His Spirit would lead men into all truth, He surely included this among the many other agencies through which that Spirit would work, continuing and interpreting the revelation of the Bible in the preaching of the Word throughout the centuries. Nor can it be questioned that the Church is responsible for the systematic teaching of the Bible and of religious truth. Every possible provision should be made for this in every congregation. Prayer-meetings, Bible classes, courses of lectures, studies of books should be included in every year's programme of church work; and the endeavour of every faithful minister must be to make these studies so

interesting as to tempt the people to pursue them further for themselves. Yet it must be confessed that so far as the actual preaching is concerned, the pulpit is an extremely poor instrument of education. The subject is the widest in the world, embracing the bearing of religion upon every existing experience of human life, every fact that has ever happened, every thought which has ever been recorded. The opportunity for imparting this world-wide education is one half-hour, or at most two half-hours, per week. Even if the pulpit had no other function to perform than education—and it has many others—the preacher's opportunity is miserably inadequate. Let him do what he can, by courses of lectures, expositions, and all other means at his command, the education he can hope to impart will be at best but the merest smattering of knowledge, ridiculously out of comparison with the education given in any University class or technical school.

Even, however, if education were far more fully within the power of the pulpit than it is, it would still be impossible to regard it as the chief object of preaching. Just as in the case of testimony, education is not human enough, not intimately personal enough, for that. The peculiarity and distinction of the preacher's office, as contrasted with all other callings, is the close relation between preacher and hearer. "No man," says Henry Ward Beecher, "is to preach for the sake of the sermon, nor for the sake of 'the truth,' nor for the sake of any 'system of truth'; but for the sake of the hearts and lives of the men that listen to his words. How aimlessly does he preach who has no thought of men, but who sympathises only with his own cogitations."[1] This indicates something more human than testimony, more intimate than education. It has been called "inspirational" but the word in its common usage is too narrow. *Appeal* is perhaps the most appropriate term. As we have already seen, the

[1] *Lectures on Preaching*, 1. i.

lack of interest is the worst fault of preaching, and the gaining or forcing of interest is its initial triumph. But this ideal is only to be reached by putting oneself in the place of others, by expressing their own life, with its needs and aspirations, its failures and its successes. Dr. Whyte, commenting on the curious and intimate detail with which the writer of the Book of Proverbs discusses the life of the virtuous woman in her home, says, "The man must have been a sort of city missionary, to be able to hold up the looking-glass in that fashion to the women of his day." This office of appeal has many different functions. Comfort for the distressed, enlightenment for the ignorant, rebuke and stern denunciation for the wicked—these and countless other lines of operation are within its scope. The preacher has to know the already existing content of the people's mind and thought, and to attach new intellectual, emotional, and moral values to it. From his wider consciousness of life as a whole, he has to arrange its diverse interests in juster proportion, and to insist upon securing for eternal things their proper domination over the passing shows of time. Wesley tells us in his *Journal* how on one occasion he found himself confronted with a roomful of people daubed with gold and silver, and adds significantly, "That I might not get out of their depth, I began expounding the parable of Dives and Lazarus." On the other hand, in Isaiah lxi. 1-3, that perfect *vade-mecum* for preachers which we have already quoted, "to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives," one feels in every sentence a great sympathy and understanding vibrating to a new human need. It involves, as Henry Ward Beecher epitomises it, as the two main qualifications of the preacher, that he shall have fruitfulness in moral ideals and the power of winning men.[1] For, in the great words of the same author, the ultimate aim of

[1] *Lectures on Preaching*, 1. i.

preaching is no less than "reconstructed manhood."[1] His work is to build men up in truth, righteousness, and love, by bringing them to Christ.

Thus the objects of preaching are in the main threefold. Testimony is a necessary and a permanent part of its agency, but it must always be kept subordinate, and confined within narrow limits. Education is necessary, but the conditions are such that complete education is impossible, and the effort directed upon this end must also be subordinate and limited. The supreme object of preaching is appeal, in the whole width of the meaning of that word. This fact alone is sufficient to ensure that preaching must ever be trying work for the preacher. In respect of his audience this will be so, for it will bring him in contact with all the morbid side of human experience. In respect of his own soul it will be no less trying. What manner of man must he be who deliberately adopts an office whose demands are so exacting, not only upon his imaginative sympathy, but upon the freshness, sensitiveness and intensity of his feeling for men? Above all, his office will try him in respect of God and his relation to God; for his appeal is not merely the voice of a friendly mortal, calling to his brother men. Through him the heart of the Eternal God is for ever crying the cry of Jesus Christ, as through pain and death He sought and found His own.

There are several false trails upon which a preacher may lose his way so that he never arrives at the true object of his preaching. Some of these we shall be called upon to consider later on. But meanwhile I wish to point out, with all the emphasis I can, that one which seems to me the commonest and at the same time the most dangerous. Perhaps you may have noted that memorable sentence which was quoted a few minutes ago, "How aimlessly does he preach who has no thought of men, but

[1] *Lectures on Preaching,* 1. i.

who sympathises only with his own cogitations." The danger to which I am referring is that of selecting either style or matter which are interesting to oneself, without sufficiently or at all considering whether they are interesting to the people one is addressing. Our habits as students of theology have taken us, or are supposed to have taken us, into a region of thought and a vocabulary of language which are neither natural nor familiar to any but the merest fraction of those who hear us preach. Nothing is more natural than for a man who has been accustomed for years to train his mind along certain lines of reading and thinking, to pursue these lines in his choice of text and subject, and in the construction of his discourse, utterly oblivious of the fact that he is practically alone in his interest in these things. It is because of this fatal severance of interests that in some churches the hearers find the sermons so deadly dull that they are actually reduced to reading their Bibles during the sermon. George Herbert, counselling those who are thus afflicted, assures them that at the worst God may take up the text and preach patience. That is no doubt a consoling reflection, but the preaching of patience from all sorts of different texts is bad exegesis. The text, whatever it be, has a meaning of its own, and God has given His preachers the responsibility of making that meaning interesting to their flocks.

Preachers are often but poor judges of their own preaching. You remember that passage in *Annals of the Parish* where Mr. Balquidder's congregation is anxious to provide him with a helper. He, however, declares that "I felt no falling-off in my powers of preaching: on the contrary, I found myself growing better at it, as I was enabled to hold forth in an easy manner for a whole half-hour longer than I could do a dozen years before." This reminds one of the time of James II., when it is said that one incumbent informed the people that, though he

was enjoined to read the second Declaration of Indulgence, they were not compelled to listen.[1]

Sometimes this lamentable state of affairs is due to sheer egotism in the preacher. The pulpit isolates a man, and puts him physically on a higher platform than his fellow-worshippers. To a man with any taint of vanity in him such exalted isolation is absolute poison. It gives him "the air of being his own statue erected by national subscription." It is but natural that in such a case the preacher should accept his own individual interests as necessarily interesting to everybody else. But even men of exemplary humility may have theories or subjects which have awakened their interest and become their special studies. We are all familiar with the bore who in private life victimises his friends with perpetual discourse upon his pet hobby. Alas, the pulpit also has its bores, who victimise their congregations in similar fashion. For many preachers, among whom may be found some of the ablest students from the seminaries, theology itself has a strong fascination. These were in former times the most acceptable and popular preachers. In those times, at least in such communities as the Scotland of the Covenanting days or the New England of the Pilgrim Fathers, practically every member of the congregation was a theologian. I bought, for a few pence, an old copy of Luther's *Commentary on the Galatians*. It would be safe to say that not one in ten thousand of the people to whom any of us preaches has read that great classic. Yet appended at the end of my copy there are fourteen pages of names. The list comprises weavers, inn-keepers, tailors, carpenters, labourers, and a poet, dwelling in towns and villages in the West of Scotland. They are the names of those who subscribed the money for the translating and publishing of the commentary. Anyone can see the difference between the lot of the minister who preached

[1] Brown, *Life of John Bunyan*, ch. xvi.

to those men and his who preaches to their descendants. It is even true that a highly spiritual man, whose interest is absorbed in the mysteries of religious devotion, dare not speak to his congregation as if they were equally deep in the *arcana* of religion. Such men are apt to claim God as one whose interests are confined to the same mystic region as their own, and to preach far above the actual interest of ordinary people. The hearers are interested in their particular arts and professions and trades, in science and politics, in commerce and engineering. But God is not the head of the clerical profession; He does not breathe merely the rarefied atmosphere of spiritual things. He is equally at home among the hewers of wood and smiters of iron; He made the earth and all that is upon it, the heavens with all their suns and stars. And those who have their interests in these things are not without their portion in the Maker. The preacher who ignores this obvious fact, and confines his preaching to a region which is outwith the daily familiarities of men, need not wonder if his message fails to convey the impression of reality to those who hear.

In a word, the preacher is a professional student of theology, a professional sermon-maker, and those to whom he preaches are neither. It is not enough that he himself should be interested in what he says: those who hear must also be interested. On the one hand, therefore, he must study to so express his theological convictions and his spiritual experience as to draw forth their interest, at least in the form of curiosity and desire; on the other hand, he must educate his own interest, and in thought and feeling train himself to go where his people live.

Considering the number of long and elaborate text-books which have been written upon Homiletics, especially the German and the French treatises, it becomes evident

that for a course so short as the Lyman Beecher Lectures, one aspect alone, or at most a very few aspects, must be selected, and the vastly greater part of the subject left out. I have selected the subject of *Reality in Preaching*. In the next lecture I shall go on to study it in its bearings upon the relations of experience and dogma, and to lay the stress for preaching on the former rather than the latter. We shall observe that the transition from dogma to experience is one of those constant processes in the history of man's intellectual and religious life which now and then, in the stress of tragic upheavals, become suddenly manifest and hasten to effect their completion. Such an upheaval has been the Great War, and the third and fourth lectures will be devoted to a study of the war's actual religious effect upon the men who have fought it. In the concluding four lectures I shall speak of the preacher as expert, as statesman, as priest, and as prophet, each of these studies being an attempt to record one aspect of the return to reality in preaching for which the war has so peremptorily made its demand.

## *LECTURE II*

### *Dogma and Experience*

THE contention of the first lecture was for reality in preaching as the remedy for the widespread falling-off of popular interest in it of recent years. We pass on now to the further consideration that in dealing with men the test of reality, and so the secret of interest, is experience. It is along the lines of common human experience, and along these alone, that a preacher can hope to be intelligible to his hearers. The only thing a man knows at first hand, and therefore the only thing he can be said in any considerable measure to understand, is the thing that he himself has been through.[1] There is no greater danger to the human spirit than that of habitually living, thinking, and talking outside the range of one's own experience. This habit furnishes us with many of the most pitiable spectacles of modern life. The Philistine who occupies himself with art, who discusses pictures which he does not comprehend, or music which, if the truth were told, is a meaningless blank to him, is sufficiently familiar. In a recent novel the danger of the same habit was exposed in domestic life, where a household is well-nigh ruined in happiness and peace by its mistaken loyalty to the ideas of a dead benefactor. They were "living and occupying themselves with ideas outside the range of their actual, vital experience—talking about

[1] It is perhaps superfluous to explain that this in no way asserts the restriction of actual knowledge to the phenomena of *sense* experience, as is done by certain schools of philosophy. There is much spiritual knowledge which is not communicated through the senses, and which is nevertheless true experience.

what they didn't understand." When religion becomes a pose of this sort, the tragedy is deep indeed. Fortunately there is a growing tendency on the part of self-respecting laymen to reject this and all other poses, in favour of downright simplicity and frankness both in their acceptances and rejections.

A famous French writer has said that "Whatsoever lives, be it but a little dog, is at the centre of things." That saying is essentially true of each individual human being. He who speaks aside from the experience of his hearer is, for that hearer *eccentric*. All writers on the communication of religious truth are agreed upon this point. "The truth must be personal—a living experience, a glowing enthusiasm, an intense reality."[1] "All sound and legitimate doctrinal construction must be based on experience."[2] I fear all this must be so familiar to you as to seem to be little better than platitude—indeed I hope that this is so. Yet much that is unfamiliar and of high importance may be involved in matters of common knowledge such as this.

The general subject of these lectures is "The War and Preaching," and their leading thesis may be summed up in the statement that the war has recalled preaching, as it has recalled religion also, from dogma back to experience. That, however, is by no means a phenomenon peculiar to the war. It is the latest climax of a long and continuous process in the history of human knowledge and belief. This fact creates a new sense of the serious importance of the religious aspects of the war, as factors in the evolution of Christian faith. I have accordingly ventured to devote the present lecture to a short historical study which will render it more abstract than the other lectures, but, I trust, not without an interest of its own.

The general process may be summed up in these two

[1] Henry Ward Beecher, *Lectures on Preaching*, i. 16.
[2] Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ii.

phases: (1) From experience to dogma; (2) Back from dogma to experience. The first process, both individual and in general history, is from experience to dogma. Neither the race nor the individual is born with any ready-made system of beliefs, any supply of intuitions or of known facts stored in his brain "like so many peas in a box." We are born with capacities for acquiring beliefs, and with nothing more. As experience begins and increases, we gather one by one our store of facts, and form one by one our judgments and opinions. In his *Authoritative Basis of Faith,* Dr. Martineau has once for all disposed of all hope of finding an external authority which shall be the source of our beliefs, and has proved beyond dispute that all our real knowledge must begin within the soul in experience. Gradually, as the acquisitive process goes on, the isolated experiences group themselves into sets of opinions which may be expressed as dogmatic beliefs regarding life. These, at first the cumulative product of experience, become detached from the memory of the experiences which first gave rise to them, and remain as independent convictions. This is true of the individual, but of the nation and the race it is true upon a much larger scale. The experiences of one generation produce the beliefs of that generation. These formed beliefs are taken over, already finished products, by the next generation, and are passed on to subsequent generations as traditional dogmas. They may or may not be verifiable by the experience of these successive generations. When they are, they are simply confirmed and adopted. When they are not thus verified, they may still persist as settled matters—*choses jugés*—while experience is building up a totally different group of convictions. Thus the experience of the past becomes the dogma of the present, and in cases where the present experience does not confirm them, dogmas are simply masses of petrified or embalmed experience. Where the dogmas are themselves arranged

in larger groups, you have the scientific system, the social code, the religious creed. These systems, codes, and creeds are the museums in which masses of petrified experience are preserved, together with more or less dogmatic matter which is not petrified but can be verified by present experience, and so continue alive and active.

That is the initial process, but the second is bound to come in reaction—the movement from creed, system, code, back to the examination of the individual dogmas which compose these, and from dogma back finally to experience again. This is the process characteristic of the later, as the former is of the earlier periods of civilisation. In modern periods of history we have been living in the days of the process from dogma back to experience. It has been largely unconscious, an atmosphere which men breathe, a spirit which directs the tendencies of mind, rather than an intentional and expressed movement. It has, as we shall see, spread throughout the whole field of thought. It has been working with a stronger leaven than any other of the forces of recent times.

But in the course of these slow and subconscious or unconscious processes, there come moments of stress and crisis, which for one reason or another bring out the secret process into the light of a conspicuous event. By the fierce light of such an event, and under its violence, strain, and tension, the whole story of our own development and of that of our times is suddenly interpreted. We see the past foreshortened, and mark its successive stages towards this goal. Supreme above all other instances that might be cited is the Cross of Christ itself. In that event there was at once the interpretation and the complete fulfilment of the process of all the ages of man's life on earth. Not only His sufferings, but much else was finished when Jesus died. Much in the intellectual, moral, social, and all other spheres, came then to completion and to light. In the new calvary of the world's greatest war

we see another such event. It is probable that not since Jesus cried "It is finished," and gave up the ghost, has any such critical event emerged from the processes of life. The war has come upon a world literally seething with processes. It has hastened and intensified these processes violently, furiously, until already we see their "whole results." But of all the processes which the war has, as it were, precipitated in definite event, there is none in which this precipitation is more striking than that from dogma to experience. In every field of thought we can test the truth of this basic fact, but not even the most foreseeing man alive to-day can predict its ultimate consequences.

The process from dogma back to experience is evident in the history of education and of science. The whole trend of modern developments in educational method is back from theoretical to practical methods. Grammar *e.g.,* which is the philosophy of language, used to be taught before the language itself had been acquired: to-day the order is being rapidly reversed. Pupils are learning language as infants learn it, from actual speech; and grammar is being introduced after, and not before, the materials have been thus gathered for it to work on. Similarly geography is no longer taught *in vacuo,* by means of lists of towns, rivers, and mountains in a land chosen at random, and therefore without any significance for the imagination. Modern teaching of geography begins with the survey of nursery or classroom, and proceeds to farther regions as the traveller proceeds, experience merging into imagination as the horizons sweep out and back. The same principle applies in a very remarkable degree to science. The concealed knowledge of the alchemist and astrologer, which we commonly call magic, consisted of masses of dogma which had been formed from experience imperfectly understood, had become detached from the experience which originated them, and had acquired a mysterious and transcendental authority of their own,

to question which was regarded as sacrilege. When science discarded magic for experiment, she began the process from dogma to experience, and with that beginning she set out for the first time on the career which has already led her so brilliantly and so far.

The history of philosophy shows us the same double process. It is common among those who do not know, to deride philosophy as a vain wandering in tangled forests of meaningless words, and there have been philosophies which have well deserved the derision. Yet philosophy too began in experience. Its origins were the honest endeavours of primitive men to understand and explain the facts and thoughts common in ordinary life. The questions asked by Socrates were generally very simple questions, to which the least learned men could attempt answers without presumption. Cicero demonstrated that the true genius appeals equally to experts and to common people. But philosophy also accumulated dogmas whose experience-origins were soon forgotten. She departed from the wise simplicity in which she began. She floated, balloon-like, among abstract principles infinitely far away from life as men lived it, until she earned for herself that sinister reputation which has become a catchword of the thoughtless. Then came Bacon, the first to see clearly that the error lay in the divorce of dogma from experience. By substituting inductive for deductive logic, he recalled philosophy from the clouds to the solid earth, and taught men to return for truth to experience from dogma. Kant and Hegel, each in his own way, stood for the same return. The process has been repeated in our own time by Professor William James. It is easy to dismiss him as "popular" or as extreme. It is easy to deny to Pragmatism the power of arriving at a metaphysic. But the fact remains that philosophy as he read it, showed the usual tendency, and had been ballooning again until it had almost got out of sight.

From the heights of its vaporous dogma he recalled it in among the actual and verifiable facts of life, and by doing so he rendered signal service to his time and to the future.

The history of religion and theology exhibits precisely the same phenomena as that of science and of philosophy. The key to unreality in religion is its divorce from experience. No shrewder nor more trenchant words ever came from the pen of John Bunyan than those of that passage in which he satirises, in his *Talkative,* the type of professing Christian who is a theoriser without experience.

Like philosophy, religion (and so theology) began in experience. Its earliest records give us primitive man's interpretation of the things that were happening in his soul. From the first, as his thought wandered and searched darkly among the experiences of the unintelligible world, we can see that the Spirit of God was with him, guiding his groping hand, and the gradual but steady progress of revelation followed. Yet always there were those who sought to lay hold upon each new discovery of divine truth, to detach it from experience, and to invest it with tyrannical power to check the free development of thought. Rabbinism, with its passion for the elaboration of truth already given, its constant fallacy of a revelation closed and sealed at some point before contemporary times, and its supercilious habit of withdrawing such knowledge as had been attained, into a secret lore to which the common worshippers had no access, had all but succeeded in stripping popular religion of the last vestige of intelligibility and reality. Then Christ came, and saw the axe lying at the roots of the Upas Tree of Rabbinism, ready to His hand. He was at once recognised as the friend of the common people, who heard Him gladly and with astonishment. He talked to them about lilies and about birds, about ploughs and candles, about loaves and fishes. Religion, as He proclaimed it, was con-

cerned with these rather than with sealed parchments. When the Rabbis met Him with their Law, which they had rendered meaningless by their endless commentaries, He proclaimed a new law embodying and interpreting the old, written not on tables of stone but on the fleshy tables of the hearts of men. That was, in Rabbinical eyes, His crime. He "received sinners," by which they meant that He talked to ordinary men in ordinary language. Losing all patience with the bright spectacle of His ministry among common men, they exclaimed that "this people which knoweth not the law is cursed." But ignorance of the law may be the highest blessing for men, when the law has become a thing aloof and deadening, in which all contact between religion and common life is lost. The special venom of this curse was accounted for by the fact that He had insisted that religion is a thing which men can understand, had drawn it down from ballooning in their misty sky, and shown it familiarly walking with them in the ways of their daily life.

The early Christian Church sprang into being out of personal experience. Its charter may be said to be the words, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life (for the life was manifested and we have seen it . . .); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."[1] In their preaching, the apostles appealed, not to their own experience only, but to that of their hearers. Dr. Henry Ward Beecher points out that "the apostles felt for common ground with the people whom they addressed," and he mentions the fact that the phrase "You all know," or its equivalent, is repeated some forty times in the record of their propaganda.[2] The Church rose directly from men's experience of Jesus Christ. Its foundations were the facts of His life and death. Its inspiration was their own

[1] 1 John i. 1-3. [2] *Lectures on Preaching*, i. pp. 24, 25.

personal experience of His spirit, and their sense of oneness with the life of God through Him.

It was experience that formed the main criterion upon which the canon of Scripture was determined. Inspiration can never be rightly understood when it is regarded as an external force. The spirit in a man is the agent through which the Divine Spirit works. The human spirit has for its task the understanding of the facts of life, and that understanding is limited and determined by the conceptions of the age he lives in. These will always be more or less inaccurate. His knowledge of history and of science will be and will remain that of his contemporaries. Upon no such external facts will the Divine Spirit enlighten him. But the Divine Spirit, working with such mixed materials, will direct him into ever higher and higher understanding of God, and of human life in the light of God's purposes of righteousness and love, as he discovers these playing upon his own experience of life. Thus the matter of inspiration is not facts but the interpretation of facts. Accordingly, the criterion for inspiration must be the witness of other lives to these interpretations as being true or false to their own experience. If it be objected that this must always be more or less arbitrary, the answer is that the Divine presence and purpose is not a human fancy, but a definite and living fact. Each individual case will doubtless present features of its own, which may differ from, or even contradict in some details, the experience of another. Yet in the main the elements common to all subjects of the Divine Spirit's operation will so far outnumber the points in which individual cases differ, as to result in a common faith, essentially the same in all ages and to all Christians. It is true that there is a difference between the effect of the Spirit upon those who wrote the sacred books of Christendom, and His work upon those in later days who read these books. Yet that is only a difference in the detail of the operation.

Holy men of old recognised in their own experience the working of the Divine and wrote down the record of what they found. Later men recognise in that record a convincing interpretation of their own spiritual life. In both cases the medium of inspiration is experience.

When, later on, we come to the time when creeds were formed, we find the same principle again at work. Creeds are repositories of dogma which began as records of experience. Take even such an elaborate and apparently abstract creed as the Athanasian, and examine it in the light of history. It will be found that every sentence of it is directed against one or more than one heresy. The Church never knew her faith, in the shape of formulæ, until it was denied. Then her sensitive spiritual consciousness was wounded. She shrank back from what she definitely knew she did *not* believe, and so she found, one by one, her positive positions. But the heresies were also the aberrations and misinterpretations of living experience, and the denials of them were produced by the normal experience of the Christian soul. In many cases the direct play of experience was obscured by traditional acceptances and traditional denials. But the ultimate source of creed and heresy alike lay in the living experience of men. No one will deny the necessity for the expression of experience in dogmas and for the arranging of dogmas in creeds. The Church is a unity, and common standards of this sort were indispensable to its corporate life. But it so happened that the first great creed-making age was that in which Greek philosophy was the dominant influence upon the world's intellectual life. Dr. Hatch, in his Hibbert Lectures, has shown how strong and how effective that influence was, in first crystallising and then fossilising religious thought. The Church gained from Greek philosophy much that was valuable, of system and of form—valuable to clearness of thinking and consistency of structure. But she paid the price in vitality.

Dogmas that had been caught in the complex net of Greek philosophy had already become detached from the living experience in which they had first arisen. To be an orthodox theologian one required also to be an expert philosopher; and of all believers, however inexpert philosophically, orthodoxy was demanded. Theology, as Dr. Coffin has said, is excellent so long as it is living theology;[1] *i.e.* so long as its dogmas are held as rescripts of living experience. When it becomes dead, in the sense of being detached from living experience, and discussed, affirmed, or denied as a system of abstract propositions, it may prove to be not only a hindrance but an enemy to faith.[2]

The artificiality of the theological system which was growing up under their hands, nay the very completeness of that system, might have warned the makers of the Early Christian creeds that those creeds must be kept in vital touch with the experience out of which they sprang, and so left fluid and free to find their own natural development. Unfortunately, this was not what happened. The growing temporal and spiritual power of the Church tempted churchmen, and they fell. True, many mystics kept for themselves the direct contact between dogma and experience, and their wonderful lives were sometimes the directest channels through which the grace of God flowed out to men. But the Western Church, no less than its Eastern rival, drew the ideal of orthodoxy farther and farther away from living experience, until

[1] *In a Day of Social Rebuilding*, p. 10.

[2] "Philosophical systems are like those thin threads of platinum that are inserted in astronomical telescopes to divide the field into equal parts. These filaments are useful for the accurate observation of the heavenly bodies, but they are not part of the heavens. It is good to have threads of platinum in telescopes; but we must not forget it was the instrument-maker put them there" (Anatole France, *The Garden of Epicurus*, p. 117).

there fell upon the world the dark night of the Middle Ages. The Reformation was simply the return of the Church from dogma and ritual to experience. In the words of Dr. George Adam Smith, "Remember how our reformers had to grapple with the hard mechanism in the worship of their time, and how they bade the heart of every worshipper *speak*—speak for itself to God with rational and sincere words. So, in place of the frozen ritualism of the Church, there broke forth from all lands of the Reformation, as though it were birds in springtime, a great burst of hymns and prayers, with the clear notes of the gospel in the common tongue."[1]

But Reformation theology soon became detached from living experience, and passed into abstract systems of dogma whose points of contact with human life were few indeed. Stripped of the charm of ritual and the pomp and circumstance of service, stripped even of the artistic beauty of Gothic architecture, and jewel-like glass, and splendid music, dogma became even more arid and repellent than it had been in the Roman cathedrals and churches of an earlier day. It would be difficult to conceive of anything less human than the Protestant controversies regarding the covenants or the decrees. In some quarters this remoteness from man's ordinary interests was openly acknowledged. "Jupiter" Carlyle saw nothing inappropriate in praising a ministerial friend as "a delightful fellow, and wholly devoid of enthusiasm." It has been said of Lord Palmerston that he "allowed religion to come no farther into the affairs of ordinary life than suited a country gentleman's ideas of the fitness of things."[2] With the Reformation also, and as a consequence of its freedom for each individual Christian in matters of religion, there arose a luxuriant denominationalism, which divided the Protestant Church into a large

[1] *The Book of the Twelve Prophets,* p. 343.
[2] Justin M'Carthy, *History of Our Own Times,* ch. xlvi.

number of separate sections. Naturally, each section felt itself pledged to the testimony for which its fathers had seceded from the main body of the Church; and in some quarters those testimonies came, as has been already said, to acquire an importance and an emphasis as matters intrinsically important, long after they had ceased to be living questions. In these ways Reformation theology grew abstract and was divorced from experience, ballooning among controversies and ideas far removed from the living interests of the Christian soul.

The return to experience was bound to come. The hunger of man's spirit compelled it. It came in successive revivals, such as those associated with the names of Wesley, Whitefield, Moody. The actual teachings of these and other leaders of revivals did not differ greatly from the dogmas of the dead orthodoxy whose slumbers they disturbed. But they brought those dogmas into vital connection with experience, and appealed not to abstract truths but to the actual facts of life.

In theology the most famous protagonist for the return from dogma to experience is Albrecht Ritschl. The violence of the opposition with which he and his school have been assailed has served to familiarise men with a system, the central principle of which most men will find helpful, and some absolutely necessary, if they are to preserve their Christian faith. Already it has given rise to an enormous literature, both in opposition and defence. One of the most valuable English contributions is that of Principal Garvie, a conspicuously fair and masterly volume.[1] Of the three leading representatives of the school, —Harnack, Herrmann, and Kaftan,—the mind of Herrmann is by far the most congenial to the point of view. For the teaching of Ritschlianism a peculiarly sensitive, tender, and even mystical nature is required, and it must be confessed that in these respects the founder of the

[1] *The Ritschlian Theology.*

school is somewhat deficient. Herrmann's *Communion with God* is the finest as well as the most popular exposition of the doctrine, which there reveals its value for the devotional life of the soul.

Ritschl, while he wages an unremitting warfare against metaphysics as a basis for theology, does not discard theology as such. On the contrary, he is the exponent of an extremely complex and comprehensive theology. His system of theology, however, has been accepted in its entirety by none of his followers. Each of them breaks away from him at so many points, and each of them differs at so many points from other followers, that there can hardly be said to exist any Ritschlian theology at all. But that very breaking up of the school into so many diverse theological positions, forces back our attention all the more strongly on the central principle of the system, on which alone Ritschl and all his followers are agreed. That principle is the substitution of experience for dogma as the basis for Christian belief.

As has been already indicated, Ritschl does not deny the validity of dogma, although he denies the validity of the ancient Christian creeds, founded under Greek influence upon metaphysics. Ritschl actually prepares a new creed of his own. But he founds all dogma not on metaphysics but on experience. By this he does not mean to advocate individualistic mysticism, which he expressly repudiates and to which he does scant justice. The experience on which he would found his dogma is connected directly not with the mystical but with the historic Christ. The effect of Christ upon the soul is seen in certain definite religious experiences, convictions with their consequent emotions, regarding sin, and goodness, and all the other matters of the Christian life. It is difficult sometimes to determine whether by the effect of Christ upon the soul he means the effect produced by the study of the historic facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection, or

whether he means to indicate the direct personal effect of the living Christ upon the soul of the individual. It would appear that both of these influences are included in his view. The effects thus produced give rise to dogma in the form of "value-judgments." These judgments are not convictions as to what Christ is in Himself, arrived at by metaphysical dialectic; they are the convictions of our own experience of what Christ is to us. They are saved from the condemnation of mere subjective beliefs by the fundamental acceptance of the facts of Christ's life as historic and objective. Nor are they an excuse for intellectual cowardice or laziness, which gives up the quest for ultimate reality, and contents itself with the will to believe whatever it finds helpful or convenient. Since Christ is real, the convictions which arise from contact with Christ are real so far as they go. If they do not go as far as a reasoned and complete metaphysic, they give us light enough to live by.[1]

The doctrine of the Trinity may be taken in illustration of the two methods of reaching faith. Vast masses of metaphysical argument have been accumulated on that doctrine, with its consequent dogmas as to the two natures and one person of Christ. The various results thus reached have no doubt satisfied the theologians who achieved them. But it may be safely asserted that for the overwhelming majority of believers they mean nothing whatever, and for the far greater number of persons who profess no beliefs, they present only a sanctified mathematical chimera. Yet every Christian soul has actually discovered the Divine Trinity in his own expe-

[1] It must be borne in mind that Ritschlianism is an essentially ethical interpretation of Christianity, which it regards as the expression of the ethical view of the world. The system has been forcibly described as "Kant done into the New Testament." "Faith in God," says Lotze, "is of the nature of a deed, and is to be ascribed to character, and the saying well expresses the Ritschlian view.

rience. There have been times when in loneliness and helplessness of spirit he sought and found the Highest in the sense of Fatherhood. At other times, driven by passion, shamed by remorse, or crushed by disaster, the only form in which the Highest seemed real to him was in the Cross of Calvary. Yet again, in the search after knowledge, the pursuit of art, or the energetic striving of enterprise, he found inspiration, enthusiasm, and consecration of these departments of ordinary human life only in the sense of a mysterious indwelling and assisting presence—the Holy Spirit.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the present age than this general tendency and process from dogma to experience, of which Ritschl is so notable an exponent in the department of theology. Benjamin Kidd and Mr. Arthur Balfour may be taken as typical exponents of the modern reaction against reason as the foundation of faith, and so against the metaphysical systems of theology. M. Anatole France, in lighter vein, and with his own peculiar blending of ridicule and wistfulness, has almost founded a school of anti-rationalism. Professor Bergson has actually founded such a school. For him "the universe is not a completed system of reality, of which it is only our knowledge that is imperfect," but "the universe is itself becoming. Consequently the value of the philosophy and the conviction that it will bring to the mind will be seen to depend ultimately not on the irrefutability of its logic, but on the reality and significance of the simple facts of consciousness to which it directs our attention." "The fundamental character of Bergson's philosophy is . . . to emphasise the primary importance of life as giving the key to the nature of knowledge." "Knowledge is for life, and not life for knowledge." Alongside of these names we may place that of the late Professor G. J. Romanes, from the records of whose stormy passage from agnosticism to faith many sayings might be quoted in the pres-

ent connection. The most significant of all such sayings is the following: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead, partly on grounds of reason, partly on those of intuition, but chiefly on both combined; so to speak, it is my whole character which accepts the whole system of which the doctrine of personal immortality forms an essential part."[1] This is but another way of expressing the dependence of dogma on experience, and that is the point on which all the authors quoted are at one. It does not fall within our present scope to discuss their particular systems of thought or lines of argument. It is not necessary that we should consent to any of these in part or in whole. The point to note is that each of them in his own way, and many others besides them, are representative of the practical and experiential, as contrasted with the purely theoretical and metaphysical, method of arriving at truth. If it be objected that the truth which can be reached in this fashion is only provisional, and that it offers no solution to the ultimate problems of existence, the answer is given with irresistible force by Mr. Balfour in the form of a *tu quoque*.[2] No system of beliefs can claim that it rests upon a sure foundation of reasoned metaphysic. Even physical science itself, which claims such absolute precision and completeness of knowledge, must begin by making huge assumptions which it can by no means prove. All knowledge, all faith, of whatsoever kind, is ultimately "founded upon the floods." It floats, as the ancients conceived the earth as floating, islanded upon a sea of insoluble mystery. At its best it can but record the indisputable facts of experience, which it must trust in order to live upon its floating island, and which prove to be reliable for the purposes of life.

We have dwelt at length upon this part of our subject for two reasons. First, to show that the tendency to re-

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 145.
[2] *Foundations of Belief*.

treat from dogma to experience is one of the most widespread and important of all the intellectual tendencies of our time, and that it must therefore be taken account of by the men who have to preach to those who think and read along modern lines. Second, because it is not confined to the leaders of philosophic and religious thought. It is the way in which ordinary men and women think at the present time. For twenty years I have been addressing students in Edinburgh and other British Universities. Many of these, especially medical students, were quite ignorant of the literature which I have quoted, and had made no study of philosophy or theology. Yet it was through experience and not dogma that they were able to find their way into faith. The spirit of every age is determined by tendencies of thought of which it is ignorant and whose books it has not read. Without knowing why it does so, it follows these tendencies, and finds itself unable to do otherwise. Most of us have no knowledge of metaphysic, and no opportunity of acquiring such knowledge. Yet the reasoned conclusions of contemporary experts in thought become the unconscious axioms of the inexpert, the atmosphere which they breathe. It is not so much that they object to this or that particular traditional dogma, as that they are alienated from the habit of mind which frames, trusts, and lives by dogma. It is experience alone which they find convincing, and he who would build up a faith must use this method. In the region of experience he will find general consent, while in the abstract region he will find as many divergent opinions as there are men. In this region also he will be dealing with truth which is alive with impulses towards conduct, and not with dispassionate and purely dialectic habits of mind.

It may be said that there is nothing new in this, nor anything distinctively characteristic of modern times. Luther may be quoted, and the Puritans, and all evangel-

istic leaders, as instances of strictly experiential faith. There is, however, a difference. These were indeed experiential, and it was to their living contact with experience that they owed their power. But along with their experience they retained complete systems of highly metaphysical dogma, and they interpreted experience in terms of these. For many, if not most, of those to whom we speak to-day that is no longer the case. The action of their religious life is not that of reconciling their experience with a given and undisputed system of metaphysical theology. It has no such preconceived set of certainties to act upon. It begins with religious experience alone, and seeks to discover what theological facts are necessary to account for that experience. The system which it will thus arrive at will at the utmost contain a far simpler and a far smaller set of theological convictions than those of former days.

It is true that the line I have been following has its dangers. He who abides in the fortress of dogma is in a far safer way than he who sallies out upon the open plain among the facts of life. His views of all things are prescribed to him, and they are fixed by statutes for which he has no responsibility. Even his forms of expression are formulated by convention. He who ventures forth from that fortress takes many risks. With the best of good intentions, and with a genuine religious life behind him, he may easily go astray amid the mazes of human experience. He may even dread the doom of Nadab and Abihu, who burnt strange fire in the temple of the Lord. These men belonged to that ill-fated family of Aaron whose misfortune it was to deal too familiarly with religious things, for whom these things proved too dangerous, and each one of whom paid the price—the sister in leprosy, the brothers in destruction. They too had been on the mountain with Moses and had seen the glory of the Lord. Yet that did not avail them in the day of their

presumption. But there is another thing to be remembered. Not all who venture beyond the safety of prescribed custom perish. Samuel and Elijah also are reported to have offered irregular and illegal sacrifices. In like manner it is only safe for the theologian to venture upon the new ground of experience if he has faithfully mastered the old ground of Christian dogma. He must understand well what it has meant to men and done for them, how it arose and what it expressed. Then and not till then, is he at liberty to interpret it anew and to apply to it the test of experience.

But in a day like this, a day when thought everywhere is daring and when faith is on its trial before the new necessities and new demands of life, adventure is the duty of all who preach. "And where is faith," exclaimed Edward Irving, "if thus we are to travel by sight? This prudence is the death of faith: it leaves it nothing to do whatever: for, when all is seen and calculated to a nicety, where is there any more trust in God? A Christian's life—a Christian minister's life—is one great series of imprudences."[1] There must always be a certain element of adventure in effective preaching. In Chesterton's well-known phrase, "the daisy has a ring of red," and the white flower of faith too has its tinge of passionate daring. Robertson of Brighton, when attacked by a representative of cautious orthodoxy, answered every new assault by the words, "I don't care." Losing his temper, his assailant exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Robertson, you know what happened to Don't Care." "Yes, madam," was his reply, "they crucified Him on Calvary." There is, indeed, a type of character which "cares particularly for what is unsafe in life," and such an adventurer may be justly regarded as an unsafe guide in the pulpit. But it is not for the mere sake of adventure that the preacher of to-day must often go upon the "dangerous edge of things." It is

[1] *John the Baptist,* Collected Writings, vol. ii.

for the souls of men and for the love of Christ. A famous Scottish preacher of the last generation was warned that some of his teaching was "the thin end of the wedge." "And which end of the wedge should you put in?" he replied. There are many logs to be split to-day before we can build the House of Life, or the Temple of the Lord. Of these that unwritten saying of the Master holds good, "Split the wood, and you will find Me there." In the solid blocks of our traditional orthodoxy there are undoubtedly many things which to the ordinary man are sheer unreality. Some things there are which exist only in the imagination of theologians. These are hallowed by tradition until they have become sacrosanct, as all fetishes are. Hence it follows that no man who is not prepared to shock a number of excellent people is fit for the Kingdom of heaven—he is certainly not fit for the pulpit of any intellectually and spiritually awakened land on earth. And, after all, it is the wealth of our doctrines, and not their precariousness, that makes us demand freedom for their utterance. Spaciousness, not dogmatism, is the sign of conviction in preaching, which must relate itself to the rest of life and not be afraid that it will be imperilled by any such relation.

Henry Ward Beecher[1] has called us to "come back to the conditions of apostolic times, when men were so eminent in their success in winning souls." But this means, among other things, "back to experience." Every part of your own experience, even the most humiliating parts of it, belongs of right to those to whom you minister. Also everything which you have observed in *their* experience. Nothing is more characteristic of our time than the superseding of metaphysics by psychology. "The secret of fertility is the study of human nature." You must know human nature before you can teach it anything. The world is very artificial. Its class divisions with their

[1] *Lectures on Preaching,* first series, pp. 19, 56, etc.

class prejudices, its routine of undisputed and accepted formulæ, which regulate the larger part of its conduct, are still a formidable barrier against progress, and a serious paralysing force operating against the life of the human spirit. Much of the Christian dogma has been taken over by this conventional world, and adopted as part of its unchallengeable prejudice. From the grip of this dead hand we must break away to living experience. This defiance of insensate conventionality, this breaking away from brute routine of thought, is "the victory that overcometh the world."

A final word is necessary. When we urge the return to experience, we do not mean to confine ourselves to what has been or is already experienced. The non-Christian part of our congregations has had an experience of life which is deficient in some of the highest of life's possibilities. Even the Christian part has often been seeking after a conventional sequence of religious experiences, and there has been a tendency to force religious experience to conform to that one type. The result of this has often been hypocrisy on the one hand, and despair on the other: hypocrisy of those whose consciences were asleep, and who were willing to profess experiences which they never had; despair on the part of many honest and earnest people, to whom the conventional regulation religious feelings did not come. We must aim at leading the non-Christians to new experience, not permitting them to be content with what they already have, but insisting on further experience which they ought to have. The Christians in the prison-house of routine we must lead out into the open air and the broad world, persuading them that Christianity comes to each man in an experience of his own, and helping each man to find that which is his, and not another's.

## *LECTURE III*

### *Then came the War*

"THEN came the war." And the war has been so stupendous an event in history that it is difficult to conceive of anything to-day except in terms of it. Human life is bigger than this war, and the war is after all but an incident in it. Yet it is probably the most important incident that has ever occurred. It is at once critical and formative. Crashing through all artificialities, proving all things, it has applied the breaking strain to every part of the structure of human institutions. And in doing so it has prepared the way for a future which until now has always been a dream, and which has suddenly become a living possibility and an urgent duty.

I have seen two great nations going into this war. In Chicago, on 31st March 1917, just before the Declaration of War in Congress, I sat behind the speakers on the platform of that vast gathering which gave expression to the pent-up emotions of the multitude. Great men spoke that night, and the things they said were great. The audience rose to its feet over and over again, its soul moved and swung passionately to and fro, like the innumerable flags that it waved wildly in the air. But as I gazed, my eyes filled with tears, and the magnificent spectacle grew blurred and indistinct. Instead of it I saw the darkened streets of a town in France, where, under a lashing rain, a regiment of British boys was marching to the railway station, *en route* for their first going up to the front. And then I stood upon that low hill in Flanders where,

on the Christmas Day of 1916, I had first caught sight of the Line—the long, irregular, loose-flung stream of faint sedge colour, along which the men of two hostile nations watched each other, and in whose strip of No Man's Land they met. I saw again the blood-red sun of Ypres setting behind a network of blasted trees, till night fell, and far and near the horizon was illuminated by countless lights that soared and floated over the opposing trenches. Since then I have been with the armies at almost every point of the British front. I know the weird city of the trenches, with its named streets of underground habitations, its stores and forges, its manifold life and labour, its watching sentries and homeless dreams of home. From the Hill of Kemmel I watched the battle that we fought for Holebeke. Hour after hour we waited in the dark, the silence broken only by an occasional sporadic gun. Then, at the appointed moment, the signal flamed out in crimson, the barrage thundered, and the whole earth seemed on fire, until the dawn stole away the brilliance and the battle raged on through drizzling rain. Then, for days and nights, we received the walking wounded, weary lads who had been in the shell-holes drenched with rain for one day, two days, three days and nights. We saw the operating tables of the theatres in the clearing stations just behind the line, where surgeons raced with death and gambled against terrific odds for men's lives. I dwelt among the wooden crosses, and never a walk but led me from wayside grave to wayside grave. I saw little companies of men with the red hackle on their bonnets, watching a cinema through a winter's evening across a pool of water in a flooded tent. I have seen the Virgin of Albert, on the spire of "La Basilique Martyre," lying along gigantic and horizontal, as if to force her Child to turn His eyes downward from the sky and see for Himself the miseries of the earth He came to save. I can hear now, and shall evermore hear, the voice of the

Great War. At the sea, amid the broken clay of the breastworks, a cry; on the crests of the long ridges from Passchendaele to Vimy a shout of victory; on the spacious fields of the Somme, where Nature had thrown its green mantle over the shell-holes of the tortured earth, and the flowers that sprang from that wide and level lawn were the white crosses of the dead, a silence, in which there was more of triumph than of sadness.

From such visions, crowding one's memory so strangely, one turns back to the whole question of war and its justification. We see already the harvest of all this bloody sowing, and by God's grace we shall see it still more abundantly in the years to come. But not on that account, not on any account, dare we even toy with the doctrine that the fact of war is justified by its fruits. In German books published before the war, it was the fashion to praise war as an essential element in human life upon the earth and to accept it as part of the necessary order. In every nation there was a considerable body of opinion to the same effect. I think the world has been cured of that illusion. If Sherman was justified in his famous saying that "war is hell," uttered in connection with your Civil War, how infinitely more evident and more commanding the words must be, now that science has combined with militarism to make war what it is. It is only because war had become an absolute moral necessity through the evil will of a comparatively small group of men, that it was forced upon the earth and became the sacred duty of the Allied nations. War deliberately provoked as a means to ambition is the most criminal act of malice possible to man. War as an end in itself is a thing wholly devilish, the mere insanity of the damned.

Yet in this terriblest of all wars, we who have fought it to a finish can see redeeming elements. We did not seek it. We sought to avoid it until no possible alternative was left to men of goodwill. We saw—we were forced to

see—that, hideous as it is, there are things worse than war. Security or comfort, bought at the price of betrayal, is among these things. Fortified and guarded by this assurance, it is legitimate for us to recall the facts on the other side. There is indeed some soul of goodness in things evil, and even in war there are redeeming powers. It is for us to see clearly where these redeeming powers lie, and to wrest from those past four years some gain so great as to make their cost worth while. The town of Ypres had much red brick in its buildings, and from its ruined streets many hundreds of loads of debris were taken to repair the great road that runs backward into France. The road is red, and well deserves the terrible name that was given to one part of it, "the bloody mile." Some such road as that is being constructed in history to-day. Built of the wreckage of civilisation, reddened with the blood of innumerable brave men, it may yet lead humanity onward till it passes beneath the gateway of the city of God.

The first thing which must be reckoned among the gains of the war is discipline. It is a momentous thing that you do for a young man when you take him away from his office or university or workshop and make a soldier of him. In his former employment also there doubtless was discipline of a sort but it only affected his life in parts. For the rest, he was free to manage his days and arrange their dispositions for himself. He was, in many cases, the centre of a circle of admiring friends. Among his mates he counted for a personality of some sort, who had at least a known history, and who in one way or another must be reckoned with. To his mother he was the most wonderful of sons, to his father the hope of future years. Somewhere in the background there was probably some girl or other to whom he was the one man worthy of the name, *par excellence le preux chevalier.* To his younger brothers and sisters he was the hero to

be reverenced almost as a little god. Suddenly he woke up one morning to find himself none of these things, but only No. 371458. His very personality had vanished, with all that made it interesting or impressive either to himself or others. He found himself but a detail, microscopic in value or importance, in the vast machine of the army.

With this transformation, a great simplicity comes upon life. Of all his possessions he can retain only the most necessary and central things, and but a very few of them. There comes also an irresponsibility which reduces him to a veritable second childhood. Everything that he used to do for himself is now done for him by the army. It wakens him, bathes him, dresses him, feeds him, directs his hours of work and play, prescribing alike the task and the game, until at night it puts him to bed and extinguishes his candle. He is responsible for nothing but to do what he is told to do. He, who used to take himself and his responsibilities so seriously, is now a little child lost in a strange land.

And what a land! The wicked uncle who sent forth the babes into the wild wood was a gentle nurse compared with the discipline that led this little child forth to Flanders or to France. For the wood is like nothing else in fact or fiction, unless it be Dante's forest of suicides. Of its actual horrors much has been written, and there is little need to add to a tale so ghastly. But worse than all that, in its actual effect on the wandered child, was the dreariness of the wandering. For war is no gallant adventure nowadays, and the soldier in the trenches was not engaged in a perpetual encounter with his enemies. He was a man condemned to hard labour in a continent of mud. Mud was in his eyes, mud in his nose, mud in his mouth, mud in the very soul of him! The padre who has preached at the front will remember to his dying day the expression on the faces of those singular congregations clad

in mud and steel. For sheer unqualified dreariness it would be difficult to match the sound of rain battering on one's helmet, or the mixture of sleet and shrapnel. Strange, and yet for the most part dull, the life touched the bottom levels of discomfort, until the homesick lad was numbed beyond the power of thinking; nor did he desire to be awakened, for, in his own expressive words, "It hurts to think."

Fortunately, in such an hour, thinking was not demanded of him. He had left the thinking to others, and for himself he accepted the discipline and with it fortified his soul. "There is a splendid dignity about the life of a soldier," writes a great contemporary Frenchman. "For him the path of duty is clearly defined, not the less clearly because reason has no part in defining it."[1] Excavating recently beside the Wall of Hadrian which runs across the North of England from the Solway to the Tyne, they found a massive altar, and eagerly turned to read the inscription which Roman chisels had cut deep into its stone. They expected a dedication to the gods of Rome, of war, or of the land whereon it had been erected, but they found none of these. Instead, with astonished eyes they deciphered the words, "In Disciplinam Augustorum" —"To the discipline of the Emperors." Is it not significant that those men, to whom that discipline had meant so much of loss, of hardship, exile, and danger, had yet discovered its sacredness, and could think of no higher power to which they might raise their altar? So, to many a soldier in this war of the latter days there came the discovery of the sacredness of discipline. And those who discovered that, had won the first great battle of the war.

The second consideration which has to be noticed is that of a very interesting and clearly-marked readjustment of the standards by which morality is measured, and a new scale of values in sins and virtues, involving a new

[1] Anatole France, *My Friend's Book*, p. 72.

emphasis and a new sense of proportion in the evil or the good of each. The soldier is a gentleman in khaki, wandering in foreign lands, physical, moral, and spiritual, and passing through profound and moving experiences. There are two ways in which we may interpret the moral results at which he arrives. They may be regarded as, from first to last, a distortion of moral judgments brought about by extreme and abnormal circumstances. That is a comfortable way of interpreting them, but it is a very superficial way. Abnormal circumstances may sometimes lead to a recovery of truth from propriety. They may have led the soldiers back from a conventional and artificial morality to something truer and more profound. The change of emphasis in moral questions may be a revelation of what men have blindly felt to be a truer system all along, although in times of peace it was obscured by the conventions of society or the unconsidered acceptance of tradition. For my part I cannot but believe that in many instances the extreme conditions of imminent and perpetual danger quickened men's latent instinct and common sense, and brought them back to reality from an unconvincing and artificial code. This was the task to which Christ set Himself when dealing with the Pharisees. It has the disadvantage of shocking at the outset those who consider themselves "all right-thinking persons." It has not even yet shaken the all but impregnable stupidity of many good people. But in spite of that it may possibly turn out to be a juster standard than theirs. It rests on one commanding principle, that the morality or immorality of conduct should be judged by motives rather than by acts, and that " 'tis not what man Does that exalts him, but what man Would do."

This might be illustrated in many ways. Take the instance of profanity. Tommy swore infernally—not all of him, but a very large number. It is certainly a very regrettable fact, but to its severest critics one is inclined

to reply that if they were in his circumstances some of them would swear too. Soldiers have only the plea of pent-up excitement and nerve strung to breaking point in the long years through which they were defending the lives of their critics. That is certainly an explanation rather than an excuse. But if the habit be judged by its motives, it must be admitted that it was singularly free from malice, and indeed it generally meant nothing whatever. Few fair-minded people will be ready to condemn heavily the outbursts which may be let loose in moments of wild and deadly action, when men "see red." When the language of such moments is taken over into ordinary circumstances and becomes part of the vernacular it will disgust good taste as offensive; but it will appear to most people, not so much as a capital offence against essential morality, but rather as a lamentable waste of strong language.

As to the Sabbath-breaking of which we hear so much, that was not the soldier's blame but the war's. Everyone knows how in such a war as this it is often impossible to make any but the formal distinctions of church parade and hut service from the routine of other days. This was neither a Jewish nor a Cromwellian campaign, in which it would have been possible by mutual consent to respect the sanctity of the day of rest. I have known an officer, in order to secure the services of a preacher whose message he desired for his men, to hold a Monday as a Sunday, and fix parades and routine accordingly. Yet, with all its evil, even this feature of the war was not without some redeeming elements. While it stripped the conception of Sunday from any relics of superstition and unreality which may have remained attached to it in the popular mind, it made men weary of the unbroken strain of secular life and awakened in many of them a wistful sense of the value of rest and a longing after holy things.

We have heard much of "grousing" in the army, and the passing visitor has sometimes felt it to be an ugly and even a dangerous feature of the lines. There certainly were professional grumblers there, whose presence was always the signal for discontent and bad feeling. But the prevailing temper everywhere was an almost miraculous cheerfulness, even in the midst of cheerless and depressing circumstances. I have heard officers put in a good word for the grouser. Grousing is but another form of swearing, in which very frequently the man does not mean what he says to be taken seriously, but is only seeking relief from the heavy strain. In contrast with the too easy-going, good-natured man who accepts any conditions with a smile and does not seek to mend them, the practised officer will say, "Give me the good old grouser, who tells you what he thinks of you and of the universe in many hard sayings, *but is mending sandbags all the time.*"

The question of sex-morality and venereal disease is far too large to be entered on here, but two things may be confidently affirmed. First, the actual statistics do not justify all of the sweeping and appalling statements made loosely by some earnest speakers and writers on the subject. Second, it has been proved beyond all question that the average soldier is not in this respect any more than in other respects a beast, but a gentleman with very chivalrous instincts of honour and reverence for women. When our Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was first put into uniform and sent out to France, the experiment was regarded by many as a perilously daring one. Suspicions and prophecies of evil grew into rumours and accusations. These were met by an exhaustive investigation, which resulted in one of the most complete vindications on record. The women of that corps, together with the women workers of the Y. M. C. A. huts and Red Cross services in France, have solved a very interesting and vital problem. They have proved conclusively that the real desire

and craving of the vast majority of soldiers in the field is simply for the home touch and atmosphere which are given by the presence of good and friendly women. When such women are absent the craving will take a lower form, whose gratification every base offers to war-weary men in the form of terrible temptation. The causes which give such temptations their power are not difficult to discover. Besides animal lust, strengthened by rough life in the open air, with its consequent full-blooded physical health, there are loneliness, "fed-up-ness," the desire for a lark, and above all curiosity. But the real need which such gratifications profess to satisfy is not essentially the vicious one they cater for. It is a cry for gentleness and sympathy, made passionate by the savagery and discomfort of their lives; and in the home pieties expressed in their response to every mention of mothers, wives, and children, one found what their deepest desires really were.

It has often been lamented that the dreadful deeds which have to be performed in such actions as a bayonet charge or a bombing raid upon enemy trenches must permanently brutalise those who have to do them. This, however, is not the report of those who know the men. Some of the grimmest work of all the war was done by a certain regiment at the time when I happened to be with them. I met a captain fresh from the trenches into which he had led some twenty men. They had lost two of their number, but they had killed a hundred of the enemy. Those same soldiers, finding that the local school was closed, its teachers having all been drafted into the French army, set apart four of their number to take the places of the teachers, and reopened the school. At Christmas-time the officers subscribed £100, sent a transport wagon down to Paris for a Christmas tree and toys, and gave the children such a Christmas treat as they had never dreamed of in their lives. The brutalising of men

in such circumstances as theirs is *a priori* not only probable but apparently inevitable. The fact that it occurred only to so small an extent has brought to light one of the most striking of ethical phenomena. The man who for his own selfish ends—for private greed or hate—should commit even one such act as theirs, would certainly degrade and permanently brutalise his soul. They, doing it under the fierce compulsion of a sense of duty, suffered no such deterioration. They may "see red" in the fiery moment, but when they come back, its effect upon their spirit falls off from them like a bloodstained cloak, and they return to their homes fresh, clean, and light-hearted as they left them. It seems to be the motive and not the deed that counts in permanent moral consequence—a principle which has probably never had such vivid illustration in the history of the world before. There is a capacity for resilience in human nature far beyond anything which moralists have generally understood; and that fact is one of the most important psychological discoveries of the war.

Taken all round, it may be affirmed that both the sins and the virtues of fighting men are simple and indeed primitive. As we have already noticed, the first effect of army discipline upon a man is to bring him back into a pathetic sort of childhood. Vices he has in abundance, but they are what may be called natural vices, bedrock and elemental tendencies let loose, the sins of children. The vices of peace are otherwise. A complicated civilisation, with its veneer of respectability and its enforced proprieties, tends to engender sly and secret vices—the meannesses that embitter home life, and the trickeries that degrade commerce. The soldier's vices are at least frank and passionate. Probably there is far less guilt in them than in the calculated nastiness of much civilian life that passes for respectability. In the Great Judgment if I

had to choose between the two, I would unhesitatingly take my chance with the soldier.

Of the miraculous morality, the amazing triumph of character, which the war has revealed, we can only attempt to give some faint idea. It is often asserted that when the boys come home they go the pace, and run riot in a fashion that disproves the impressions of their goodness which some of us have felt so deep and strong when we were among them in the field. No one need wonder if this should be so. The reaction from so dire a strain may very likely be violent for a time. It must be allowed that the actual experience of demobilisation has not confirmed such anticipations to any considerable degree. Yet if there should be such instances of wildness, let us judge them justly and not make too much of them. All things suddenly relaxed tend to go beyond the golden mean in the opposite direction. But such excess is not the normal or permanent condition of the man that is to be. During the storm and earthquake of war, when all moralities appear to tumble in ruins, and "the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea," still "there is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Deep-hidden, silent, yet unceasing, that river of goodness flows on eternally in the hearts of men. When they prepare themselves for the future, and set themselves to "strengthen the things that remain," they will find large supplies of material ready to their hand.

On the positive side, there are three main things which may be taken as characteristic in any attempt to estimate the ethical situation. These are Reserve forces of character, Idealism, and Mysticism.

1. *Reserve forces of character.* This is a subject which must be handled with caution when one is speaking to the men themselves. They are, as a rule, shy of hearing about their own virtues, as the following extract from a

letter may help to prove: "The reason I dislike civilian churches is that the one topic is Us, our virtues, etc." One can easily understand the point of view. Any healthy-minded young man feels uncomfortable when he is being fitted with a halo. Rudyard Kipling's lines against the "thin red line" kind of talk could not be more exactly expressive:

"We aren't no thin red 'eroes, but we aren't no blackguards too,
But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you."[1]

In this connection one remembers that the people to whom Christ says, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," will always be apt to reply, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee?"

Before the war, the decadence of England was a favourite theme of English preaching and writing. It had come to be the recognised thing for earnest persons to glorify the hardihood of past generations as an offset to the pleasure-loving softness, luxuriousness, and self-indulgence of the present generation. There was more in this than the whine of the *laudator temporis acti,* for to a certain extent it was true. It confirmed the Germans in their belief that ours was a degenerate race, and that they could afford to despise us as enemies in the field. But they got a rude awakening, and one which astonished them no less than it astonished the earnest persons aforesaid among ourselves, and even the very men whom both alike had been pronouncing degenerate.

For those victims of self-indulgence, set down suddenly on the bottom level of physical discomfort, were cheerful. The trenches were ever ready for a jest, and the dugouts often rang with laughter. This cheerfulness has been misunderstood and caricatured. The soldier was by no means the grinning idiot who was for ever cultivating a preposterous smile, nor was his cheerfulness a matter that

[1] *Barrack-Room Ballads,* p. 8.

could be explained away with a smart epigram. His face was set when things were dangerous, and an air of gravity pervaded the lines. But he was at all times—even in the hour of extreme danger—ready for the relief of laughter, and very grateful for it. A thousand times the old Scottish verse kept repeating itself to me:

"Werena my heart licht I wad dee."

Four years of trench-life means endurance beyond all possible imagination, and they endured unto the end. There was no help to be gained from looking upon the dark side of things, beyond the very real comfort of an occasional fit of grousing. But even the grouser was ready for a laugh upon the smallest provocation, and there is no doubt that the cheerfulness was a virtue as well as an assuagement. They did without everything which they had been supposed to live for, and smiled. To those who saw and lived among them, the impression they gave was of a secret spring of cheerfulness, hidden it may be even from themselves, which, in the hour of their need for it, they had discovered and tapped.

Their courage was so marvellous that the tale of it will be told with reverence and astonishment for many generations. There is no need to recount any of the countless stories which are the common knowledge of everyone. The only fear we ever saw at the front was the fear of fear itself. Men trembled lest in the hour of trial they might flinch and find themeslves unable to carry through the brave adventure in which their whole hearts were enlisted. Sometimes at first they were paralysed beyond the power of action, but such shrinking was but for a moment. A tale is told of one lad, which is typical of the experience of many. He was a mere boy, and the long interval between the order to go over the parapet and the chill hour of early morning when it had to be obeyed was too much for him. When the company had left the

trench for No Man's Land, the rounding-up officer found him, a bundle of jangled nerves, lying in the mud of the fire-step. Being a man big alike in body and in spirit, the officer did not report the boy, but, seizing him by the slack of the trousers, lifted him bodily over the parapet and set him down in the open. No more was heard of him at the time, but some nights afterwards the trench was astonished by the sound of bombs in front. It turned out that that same boy had gone out alone, his pockets filled with bombs, had hidden in a shell-hole, and then had started to bomb the German trenches all on his own account. Such experiences were not uncommon. But the most wonderful thing of all was the courage in cold blood, when, under no excitement of a charge and blinded by no illusions, men with open eyes faced unimaginable and incessant dangers. These men were not cowards in civilian life, but the majority of them were by no means regarded either by themselves or others as conspicuously brave. The time of action revealed reserves of daring that neither they nor any one else had guessed in them before.

The sense of honour, and the unwritten and unwritable law that a man must play the game, were everywhere apparent. The pure and untarnished sportsmanship with which they went out to the war was certainly one of their most characteristic qualities. It has been said of England that her battles were won on the playing fields of her public schools, and in respect of the point of honour the saying is true. It is indeed unfortunately the case that these sentiments were not cherished by our enemy in this war. He openly sneered at them as signs of folly, and he violated every code of honour which had ever been held sacred by fighting men. The inevitable result was that it became necessary to meet him on his own terms in order to save precious and only too gallant lives. At first the aircraft service was an exception, and many fine

stories are told of either side crossing the lines unharmed to drop a wreath upon the grave of a fallen enemy. Latterly even in that service all laws of chivalry came to be disregarded. Yet the fact remains that Allied soldiers, when put to the supreme test, went out to fight in a spirit infinitely more chivalrous, and with a sense of honour more exalted, than the spirit of average civilian life. In two of his most familiar lines Rupert Brooke records this:

> "Honour has come back, as a king, to earth, . . .
> And we have come into our heritage."

They had lived before very much as other men live, and had had little in their lives that called out any picturesque or romantic chivalry. But they carried their honour like a sword into battle clean and bright, and consented to no shameful thing unfit to take back with them to their mother's eyes, or forward into the mysteries of the land beyond the grave.

The crowning virtue discovered by the war was the men's unselfishness. For this, in ordinary life, many of them had doubtless been anything but conspicuous: in France, it was the daily and hourly principle of their lives. I have known a wounded man to stay for two days in a flooded trench that he might hold up the head of a comrade mortally wounded and save him from drowning. I have waited for hours attempting to relieve the suffering of a wounded lad in a tent, until at last the ambulance arrived. When I tried to lift and help him to the wagon, he absolutely refused to enter it until the man who had been lying next him in the tent was safely lifted in. At the front such stories hardly excited any interest. They were daily occurrences, the only thing a fellow ever thought of doing.

2. *Idealism.* All this astonishing discovery and development of reserves of character is not unconnected with a second factor in the case, idealism. Nothing

strikes a British visitor to the States more than the frank and unashamed profession of idealism in American men and women. You hitch your wagon to a star, and you tell us the star's name. Whether we have ideals or not, we carefully pretend that we have none. John Morley told us long ago that "we execute noble achievements, and then are best pleased to find shabby reasons for them."[1]

Of the majority of our soldiers before the war, it may safely be asserted that they did not think much in terms of ideals. They lived their lives, with the usual mixture of good and bad in them, but they did little searching after the reasons of conduct. When war broke out, a great wave of conscious idealism swept across the land. In this action of their lives at least, they knew why they acted as they did. They had certain quite definite objects for which they were prepared to fight and if need be to die. Their enlisting was perhaps the most intelligent thing they ever did. For them it was a war of principles and not a war of nations. Indian Civil Service men, assured of careers of opulence and honour, professional and commercial men just entering into their heritage of high worldly success, flung all away and dedicated themselves to the cause of ideals which for the first time in their lives they knew to be the deepest convictions of their consciences and the dearest treasures of their souls. Some of them indeed could not have defined those ideals in detail. All they could have said was that the call to arms had appealed to the best that was in them, and that they were fighting for the highest that they knew. Others defined them very clearly indeed, in one or other of the forms which we shall presently enumerate. But what was common to them all (and more than anything else it was this that forged the bonds of sympathy between your soldiers and ours) was that they were consciously dedicated to ideal ends. It was not for fun, or the love of

[1] *On Compromise,* ch. i.

fighting, or the call of adventure, that the vast majority of our boys went out. Still less was it for any worldly gain or ambition. One of them, whose life had few prizes in it, pathetically described the situation: "There's not much to live for, but there's plenty to die for, so that's all right." In a very real sense it was the sudden spiritualising of the youth of the nations.

It is true that in the course of years this high idealism of the early days died down in many cases. A visitor might easily gather the impression of men doggedly fighting on, mechanically, and with little or no remembrance of the reasons for which at first they had come out. That was inevitable under the dreary conditions. Men grew afraid of high thoughts, afraid of happy memories. "I've got some ideals about me," one of your countrymen said once to me, "and ideals are pretty lonesome things." But, under all the passionless and spiritually comatose appearance, one found the slumbering fires unquenched. One Christmas Day in a cellar at Ypres I stood in a crowd of khaki listening to a sad-faced boy who sang, "Carry me back to Blighty." I asked the men around me, "Do you fellows want very badly to go back to Blighty?" and the answer came with an emphasis that shook me, "My God!" "And would you go if you got the chance?" Immediate and unhesitating came the reply, "Not till we've finished the job." It needed but a reminder of the things that brought them out, and dull eyes flashed and burdened spirits wakened to the old enthusiasm.

Three ideals above all others were their reasons for going to the war. Love was one—the love for women and children. When the news came of the Belgian atrocities, they enlisted in tens of thousands. Anger was in their hearts, a great hot anger, but it was the anger not of petty hatreds but of love. There was little rancour against the German people, and still less against the individual man in the German trenches, except when he was detected in

some brutality. Browning has written great words about

> "Dante, who loved well because he hated,
> Hated wickedness that hinders loving."[1]

Such was the anger of love that sent men forth from both sides of the Atlantic to put an end for ever to the spirit which threatened homes and abused women and children.

Freedom and love of country was another of the central ideals. The cause of democracy and the passion of patriotism blazed into clear flame when they were threatened. Men who had given little thought to either, discovered how they loved them when they saw the only enemies of freedom left in any civilised portion of the earth, massed as in a single fortress, to stamp out the liberties not of a single nation but of the world. The following extract from a young American's letter to his father is typical of the sentiments of hundreds of thousands: "The point is this, our nation is on the verge of war, and it behooves every red-blooded young American to do his utmost for his country. If I were not one of the first to volunteer for service, I would always be ashamed of myself. I cannot explain it, father, but nowadays when I pass by a building, and the Stars and Stripes is flapping out in front, I feel a big lump come up in my throat, and I would consider it an honour to die for that flag. I have just got to get into this, and cannot keep out." Nor did the soldier think only of his own land. In all the Allied armies there were not a few who were big enough and wise enough to perceive that the most pitiable victim of Prussianism was Germany herself, and who were consciously and deliberately fighting for her liberation.

Not less than these, and increasing in intensity towards the close of the war, was the ideal of peace. As they saw the fact of war in all its illimitable insanity and outrage, and as they realised that this thing, if it were not ended,

[1] *One Word More.*

must spread into the future, they vowed in their secret hearts that it must end before their children were slaughtered on its altars. For themselves, they sacrificed their own chance of peace that they might win it for the world. And they saw more and more clearly, as the war went on its bloody way, that for this end any sacrifice were well worth while.

Home, Freedom, and Peace—these ideals, clearly perceived and deliberately adopted and professed, revealed to many an ordinary lad his native capacity for idealism. War is either idealism or savagery, either Calvary or hell. This war, as Sir Douglas Haig has all along maintained, is essentially a war of the spirit. Those who have died in it have literally died for the world. If any cause in human history was worth dying for, it was this; and no sacrifice has been lost in it, no life given in vain. The task of the future must be to preserve in peace the idealism which the war evoked—to find some moral equivalent for war which will draw out in like manner the latent heroism that is in men, and to transform their unconscious or subconscious ideals into a blazing passion for definite righteous ends.

3. *Mysticism.* This is a characteristic feature of times of stress and strain, especially if they be prolonged. It has appeared in the records of great plagues, persecutions, and other kinds of national calamity. The war has had its full share of it. The mystic or visionary phenomena have been of several different kinds. Spiritualism has gained widespread popularity of late, but it has been mostly in the civilian population, and, as was natural, chiefly among the bereaved. At the front it was astonishingly rare. One would have imagined that men surrounded on all sides by the buried or unburied dead would have been peculiarly liable to this form of search for communion with their spirits, but it was not so. At least that was my own impression, for I only met it in one or

two instances, and others have confirmed the impression from their own experience.

On the other hand, everyone must have noticed the popularity of ritual, and especially of sacraments, among men who had not previously felt any particular need or inclination for these ways of worship. No one who has attended Holy Communion at the front, where little companies gathered to receive the bread and wine, will ever forget how singularly appropriate and natural it seemed. Certain words from the Litany and the Communion Service acquired a new expressiveness there: "By thine Agony and bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial, Good Lord, deliver us." "Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer." For some of us these words have for ever consecrated the poor shell-broken ruins of peasants' homes where we heard and joined in them. They seemed to express a certain sacramental and sacrificial quality which had come upon the whole life of the trenches, and which was felt as a mystical experience by many of the finer spirits there.

But that sense of the mystical was not confined to such spirits. Many a young man saw visions then, who was by no means a visionary in ordinary times. In every concert it was noticed that the more sentimental a song or hymn was, the more popular it was. An extraordinary amount of verse was written in the trenches, much of it by lads who appeared to be quite unimaginative, and who had certainly never written verses before. Some of it was poor enough from the literary point of view; some was excellent poetry. But the interesting thing was that it *was* produced, as by a natural and irresistible impulse.

Of a more pronounced type were the legends which ran along the front like fire. The Angels of Mons, the White Christ, and others, were familiar everywhere.

Some of these are known to be purely fictitious in their origin, and yet as time went on men were found who were prepared to swear, obviously in perfect sincerity, that they had seen those supernatural appearances with their own eyes. Many strange tales were told with the utmost conviction. One boy told me how he had been in a sweat of cold fear when the command came to go over the parapet for a bayonet charge, but Christ came to him and said, "Keep smiling: as long as you smile you're safe." The fear vanished, and through all the ghastly business that followed, the tight-drawn smile never left his face. Another related how he had lain wounded in a shell-hole for thirty-six hours, and was growing desperate, when on the edge of the shell-hole he saw Jesus standing, clad in white. On this occasion the language was not in the vernacular, but was in some sort modelled upon the language of the Bible: "Suffer it for this night only; help cometh in the morning." "So," he went on to say, "I lay down in the mud and fell asleep; and the next thing I knew was when I was wakened by the stretcher-bearers come to carry me back. You see He kept His word." A third man, dying in a hospital, in his delirium had exhausted himself with a flood of wild profanity. He fell back on the pillow with closed eyes for a little time. Then the eyes opened, turned towards a corner of the ward, and assumed an expression of extreme surprise and delight. The whole face changed to a kind of rapturous welcome. He shouted "Jesus! Jesus!" and fell back dead.

Much has been said in depreciation of mysticism. Vaughan's attitude to it is common among those who lay great stress upon the probability of delusion and the frequently defective critical evidence. Ritschl discounts it with unqualified aversion in defence of his insistence on the connection of experience with the historical facts of the life of Christ. Yet strange things happen to human

nature when it is put upon the rack of danger or of pain. It is not enough to say that high tension naturally produces visions by purely material processes in the brain. Doubtless tension may be the *occasion* of vision in highly strung or sentimental natures. It is certainly true that in many cases, such as some of those above narrated, the precise form of the vision and the words which accompany it may be determined by early training or other such causes. It may even be allowed that the visionary records of the war have more value for psychology than for religion. Yet there is room for another explanation. If we hesitate to accept the doctrine of the untrustworthiness of reason as an ultimate guide to truth, as that doctrine is expounded by recent able writers, yet we need not question their contention that actual truth may be attained by other processes than reasoning. In his *Education of Christ*,[1] Professor Ramsay gives some striking instances of the sudden revelation to ordinary men of a mystical world which opens itself to them unsought. What if, as Professor William James has reminded us,[2] the organism of the brain in normal circumstances conceals from us a real world of spiritual phenomena; but becomes as it were transparent, when attenuated by violent excitements? Then, with a finer and less opaque instrument, we may be able to perceive things ordinarily concealed. There is no need to make much of the form of the vision or the language in which it speaks. That may, as has been already suggested, be but the natural way in which the individual clothes it. It is the vision itself that matters, the sense of a presence beside one, and a world to which such presences belong. There will always be a place and a necessity for the mystical point of view. So long as human nature remains, there will be those to whom this will be the most convincing way of receiving truth. But however this may be, it will certainly remain

[1] Prologue. [2] *Human Immortality.*

true that in the Great War multitudes of men whose former lives had been articulate without the Church, or the supernatural faith it teaches, did know that the curtain had swung back, and eternity had claimed them for its own.

In this lecture we have described some general conceptions of morals and religion which have been revealed by the war. Next lecture will be devoted to a more particular analysis of the religious convictions which it has revealed or induced. But we have already encountered much that may throw light on the meaning of that plea for reality in preaching which we considered in the first lecture. It was then asserted that the secret of reality in preaching is intelligibility, and the secret of intelligibility is interest—*i.e.* that which is common to the preacher and those to whom he preaches. If we have been hypnotised by words and blind to facts, we must learn a new language and speak to men in the common tongue. We must regain what Ruskin calls "the virginity of the eye," and see things as they are, looking down upon the bedrock human nature.

This, then, which I have tried to describe to-day, is part of what we shall see and have to reckon with. Apart from anything which must be considered in the next lecture, what a wealth of human experience we have already found! The trenches are great schools of psychology. Among all the educative influences of my life, I put two before all others. The first was the silence of the Australian Bush, where long ago I lived among the station hands. The second was the roar of the guns in France and Flanders, where I lived among the workingmen of Britain. In these, under the very shadow of eternity, I saw deep into the hearts of men, and this is what I found them to be. Such a discovery is a matter of first importance to preachers. These are the things which they must learn and understand.

We cannot again meet them under the high pressure of the war and of its dangers. Thank God that is past; may He grant that it be past for ever! But it will always be ours to accept the facts as they are, and to think out life's problems from the point of view of men who think like that. We must set ourselves to acquire this knowledge of men by going where they are. We have been trying to get men into our place, and now we must try to get ourselves into theirs. The supreme power of Robert Browning is that he added to a wide observation of the various phases of humanity an unequalled dramatic sympathy which enabled him to get down among the springs of action and of thought which produced those phases, and actually to think and live as if he were the man or woman he is describing. It is the first law of preaching.[1]

One Sunday night, in a military theatre at the front, a man preached to soldiers who on the morrow were going up into the trenches. His text was, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." On the following Thursday he went up into the front trench. For three successive afternoons the German trench mortars had been searching for a sap-head, and the third and second trenches were obliterated in an indescribable debris of wreckage. At his post in the traverses of the front trench a sentry stood, and had stood there through the whole bombardment. They talked for a little, and then said good-bye. But the sentry held the preacher's hand and reminded him of his text, adding, "I've stood upon my feet." Oh, *si sic semper!*

[1] This will be more fully considered in a later lecture.

## *LECTURE IV*

### *The Soldier's Creed*

WE have considered the soldier in what may be called the outer courts of his religion, his sins and virtues, his idealism, his reserves of character, his sentimental and visionary mysticism. The further question remains as to his actual religion, or at least as to what elementary thoughts and feelings there are in him which may lead to a religion if properly interpreted. Certainly there was much prayer in the trenches. As the long minutes crept on towards that awful hour before the dawn when the company would go over the parapet, he must have been less than human who did not feel the need for some friendly relation with the awful world he might have to enter so soon, and it is probable that there were very few soldiers who did not try in some way to establish such relations. Atheists and freethinkers were blatant at the base: they were conspicuous by their absence, or at least by their silence, at the front. We have now to inquire how much of all this might justly be called religion.

Many books have been written on this subject, of which Mr. Patten's *Decoration of the Cross* appears to me one of the most accurate. Some writers tend to exaggerate the so-called revival of religion at the front, and to interpret every story of a soldier's religion in terms of their own faith rather than of his. Others, severely critical, belittle such accounts, and give the impression that there was little or nothing of real religion in them all. It may at once be frankly confessed that there was very little indeed that can be recorded as a religious revival

in the definite and accustomed meaning of the words. On the other hand, there was a great deal of experience which contained the elements of a genuine religion, and which was entirely new in the lives of the men upon whom it came. One thing we may assert with confidence, viz. that whatever religious elements were observable, the great majority of them sprang direct from experience and not from dogma.

It has sometimes been complained, and not without reason, that there is a tendency to exalt the soldier into an unduly important position, as the arbiter of faith and the dictator of the world's religion. It would seem that when the boys come home we are to learn at last what to believe and how to worship. Nothing could be more unfair to soldiers than any such apotheosis, and it is the last thing that any sensible man among them would think of claiming. It is a parallel fallacy to the fashion of bowing down before "the average man," and forgetting that if he has something to teach the world he has far more to learn. The soldier is not the tyrant of the civilian's faith or conscience. He is the pioneer of some things which the Church and the world have been seeking for and which he has found. He is the man in whose consciousness many hidden processes of popular thought have come to clearness and to definite conviction. He is, as it were, the cutting edge of popular intellectual and religious movements. His experiences are of priceless value as data for interpretation: his interpretations of these experiences are of comparatively little value. But if the Church and the religious mind of the nations will interpret those experiences, their interpretations may be the beginning of a new era in religious thought.

It is foolish to talk of a new religion which the soldiers are to bring back with them from the trenches. A "new religion" is a contradiction in terms. All religion is just the human perception of the divine and response to it.

The Christian religion has proved itself to be the one medium of such perception and response, incomparable in completeness and effectiveness with any other medium which has ever been attempted on the earth. It is true that from time to time Christianity needs restatement, with new emphasis on certain of its doctrines and new interpretation of them all. Principal Garvie, discussing such tendencies in the intellectual situation as the distrust of philosophy, the confidence of science, the activity of criticism, and the prominence of the social question, writes: "Whatever may be our individual judgment of this intellectual situation, one fact is beyond all doubt or question. The Christian gospel needs a restatement in which these tendencies will find their due recognition, their justification where that is possible, or their correction where that is necessary. Such a restatement is a work of very great delicacy and difficulty; for, on the one hand, there must be no impoverishment of the 'faith once delivered to the saints,' and, on the other hand, this age must not be spoken to in a foreign tongue."[1] This restatement, however, need not be a new creed, but may be found rather in the forms of thought and language adopted by the modern preacher. Dr. Coffin has expressed this with singular felicity in regard to ordinary congregational preaching: "A Christian minister . . . must enable the members of his congregation to reach God by the existing tracks of their, perhaps antiquated, theological opinions, while he attempts to furnish them with better terminal facilities which will bring more of them—head, heart, conscience—into the life with God."[2] As to the much-discussed question of the necessity for reformulation of doctrines in a new creed, that is, as it seems to me, a task of insuperable difficulty at the present time. This is not an age suitable for creed-building. If any creed

[1] *The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 19.
[2] *In a Day of Social Rebuilding*, p. 203.

could be conceived which would command universal or even wide assent, it must be one reduced to such extreme simplicity as Dr. Denney's famous suggestion "that the symbol of the Church's unity might be expressed thus: I believe in God through Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord and Saviour."[1] A modernist scholar and priest of the Continental Roman Church said to me during the war, "Before the war there were many things; now there are only two—love of God and love of man." Such condensed statements of the essence of faith are to many Christian minds in the highest degree welcome and refreshing, but it is questionable whether they can be called creeds in the proper meaning of the term. The method adopted by my own Church has been to leave the historic Confession of Faith as the principal standard of doctrine for the Church, but to afford her ministers and elders the relief of a Declaratory Act, allowing and recognising the liberty of diversity of opinion "on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith therein set forth," and retaining for the Church "full authority to determine, in any case which may arise, what points fall within this description." This method doubtless has its disadvantages, but it is questionable whether any other method could be found at present which would better preserve the permanent element and at the same time leave the necessary room for expansion and development of faith.

To return to the soldier, we have already touched in passing on the question whether there was or was not a revival of religion at the front. It is said that within the Roman Catholic Church in France there was a definite revival of religion. Among our own troops there were many instances of a sharply defined experience of conversion. These, I think, were for the most part connected with sudden reversions to the religious experiences of

[1] *Jesus and the Gospel,* p. 398.

childhood. One soldier, whose long trench-life had dulled down all former memories and feelings into a kind of dazed oblivion, seeing a Bible in a dugout, exclaimed, as if he were remembering a former life, "Ah, yes, there's all that!" Very frequently the moment of awakening brought the man suddenly back to the memory of a good mother, and some dramatic stories are told of sound conversion wrought by the unseen mother's reappearance in conscience and in affection.

The usual phenomenon, however, was not any such observable and conscious awakening. One was constantly impressed and almost haunted by the sense that these men were more religious than they knew. This fact is described in masterly fashion in the chapter entitled "The Religion of the Inarticulate" in *A Student in Arms,* where the statement occurs that the mass of the British soldiers "never connected the goodness in which they believed with the God in whom the chaplains said they ought to believe." The text which seemed to have been written expressly to describe these men is Isaiah's words concerning Cyrus, "I girded thee though thou hast not known Me."[1] Cyrus was a pagan, but he was chosen by God to do His work. His heroic figure, the mirror of the chivalry of the ancient world, stands as a permanent type of unconscious Christianity, that most perplexing of all the religious problems of the modern world. Many of our soldiers were pagan gentlemen in khaki, who spent the best years of their lives "heroically holding the Master's lines." And something in them was voicing the intuitive spiritual affinities that were in their souls, though in a tongue which few of them could understand. Religiously, from the orthodox point of view, they were in darkness, but to them as to Cyrus God was all the time fulfilling His promise, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness." The fact is, men cannot "die daily," as they

[1] Isaiah xlv. 5.

did, without undergoing a change which is in some sense a revelation. You had multitudes of astonished men aware of blind movements in their souls. They were flinging out, on the off-chance, prayers to a neglected God. They were amazed by visions which they did not understand. Under highly mystical experience, their souls lay awakened, but helpless and uncomprehending.

If we are to face this extraordinary situation adequately we must so interpret these experiences, first to ourselves and then to the men as they return, as to build up out of them a living faith. After all, religion is not some new thing added on to human life; it is the true interpretation of human life. It is ours to give to these singular experiences an interpretation which will reveal the meaning of life in actual faith. There is urgent need of this. Their experiences were inarticulate and highly charged with emotion, and the tendency will be to drift back from them swiftly into a life in which the net result of the war will be little more than the memory of an emotion, unless we can find some means of fixing and developing that memory into a faith. A chaplain, on a day of storm and heavy rain, had to conduct parade service with troops in the open. He knew his business, and his address was short: "No man but a fool would detain you on such a day. My text is, 'What think ye of Christ?' and my sermon is, 'What think ye of Christ?' Dismiss." In that sermon he got to the roots of things. The question is not, What feel ye? but, What *think* ye? To reduce one's vague and mingled experiences to clear statement is to make progress in the religious life, for expression reacts on faith, confirms it and makes it permanent. The soldier's creed will be the interpretation and expression of his experiences in terms of convictions about religious facts.

Now, although we have very frankly acknowledged the insufficiency of his experiences uninterpreted to serve him

for a vital and efficient faith, yet we may find in them a pretty complete basis for such a faith. And that faith will not be any new one. Point by point it will turn out to be Christianity. Mr. Chesterton, with his characteristic liveliness of imagination, tells the story of his rediscovery of the Christian faith.[1] Some men set off in a yacht to discover a new island. At last they reached its shores, and found that they had run up their flag upon the Brighton coast. So he, wandering afar after a brand-new religion, discovered when he had reached it that it was just Christianity after all. Molière's immortal character, who was so excited and gratified when he was told that he had been speaking prose all his life, may stand for a type of many a soldier who in his heart has been blindly following Jesus and knowing not that it was He. A bomb dropped from a German airplane in England just missed an ancient church, and the villagers next day looked with astonishment upon the foundations which no eye had seen for centuries. So the war has discovered, in the hidden depths of many a human heart, the foundations of the Christian faith. We shall attempt an analysis of this discovery in some detail. The division is perhaps arbitrary, and it is certainly not exhaustive, but it may serve as at least a tentative illustration of how interpretation may proceed. Five points will be selected, and it is not unnatural that the first of these should lie in the direction of fundamental Calvinism.

1. *Fatalism.* From the first days of the war, no phenomenon was more generally recognised than fatalism. It was almost if not altogether universal among men when they were going up to face the chance of immediate death, and it was equally observable among the survivors who returned alive, leaving many of their comrades dead upon the field. The common phrases were that if their number was up they would be killed, and that nothing

[1] *Orthodoxy,* ch. i.

could get them except the bullet or the bit of shrapnel which had their name on it. This latter phrase reminds one of the famous saying of Napoleon Buonaparte at Montereau, "The bullet that will kill me is not yet moulded." The two forms of fatalism are contrasted by the audacity of the latter as against the simple humility of the former.

Heads were shaken over this way of meeting danger. It was considered pagan and superstitious by men who had never been themselves face to face with imminent death. But even those who had blamed it found to their surprise that, when their own turn came, precisely the same fatalism came with it. Then they discovered that it was simply natural and human. It was indeed inevitable, a matter not in a man's own choice at all. It turned out to be almost mechanical reaction by which Nature enables men to face the intense strain of circumstances which, but for some such alleviation, would be beyond the power of human nature to endure. In such an hour men simply could not go on if they felt themselves responsible for their own fate. They *must* get rid of all responsibility, and act upon the assumption that their chances of life and death depend wholly upon a cause over which they have no control. Crawling from shell-hole to shell-hole behind breastworks which have been almost entirely shot away, and within easy range of the enemy's machine-guns, there is only one course for a man to take. It is to cease from self altogether, to drop his responsibility for himself as he might let his loosened pack fall from off his shoulders, to know that "man is immortal till his work is done," and to go forward "splendidly unhindered" by self-regarding thoughts of any kind.

Creed is implicit in many acts of life where it is least suspected, and there can be no question that it is implicit in this. It is incredible that men should find strength or

comfort in transferring their responsibilities to a mere abstraction, but this fatalism did certainly bring both comfort and strength. Surely it must imply a subconscious sense of Someone somewhere to whom they were passing over their burdens. If the number is up, who put it up? If the name is on the bullet, who wrote it there? The same implication applies to the fatalism of India, of Greece, and of the Anglo-Saxons of old. It is expressed in the Old Testament by the author of Ecclesiastes in the cold dry light under which he wrote. The reply is given in the Psalms and in the Prophets, where the dark yet strengthening fatalism of the Preacher is replaced by the will of a God intensely alive, who understands and loves. We are not caryatides, bearing the burden of the world; it is God who bears that burden. In grasping that fact, however dimly, men find the immense relief of those who discover that they themselves are not the ultimate fact of the universe, and transfer their burdens to One who is. This means the abandoning of an intolerable post for which we are in no sense fit. Thus fatalism when rightly understood is not a binding but a liberating doctrine, setting men free to exert their powers to the utmost. As in the tragedies of ancient Greece, so in our soldiers, fatalism did not destroy liberty of action or the impulse to act. On the contrary, it quickened these.

Further, there is some hint of character in the Power to which men committed their destiny in this fatalism. Austere and remote that Power might be, but in laying down their burdens at its feet men did believe in "an ultimate decency of things." The trouble which many ordinary men have felt about popular theology has been the immense and heavy stupidity of its God. He has been so represented as to appear to them arbitrary, inconsistent, and vain in His jealousy about His own glory. It is not to such a Power that they intrust themselves in the fatal-

ism of battle. I do not mean that they say to themselves that He will be reasonable and benevolent, or that "Nothing can be good in Him that evil is in me." But the very fact of their trust implies some unexpressed and subconscious idea that He is trustworthy.

Watts painted his great picture of Destiny in dull colours, a figure whose face was half-expunged. It is not unlike the conception of destiny that underlay the fatalism of the trenches. Yet there are materials for a clearer faith beneath that dim visage, and it is possible to translate the vision so as to disclose a face with seeing eyes, and to gain the assent of the man who has seen the vision to the proposition that the true meaning of that which he has seen is, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Nor will he deny that words were whispered in his soul in those terrible moments when the burden fell from him, saying, "It is I, be not afraid."

2. *Mates.* We have already referred to the sense of loneliness which is one of the most characteristic and most trying features of life at the front. In the dark of the hut, behind the crowd assembled round the table to watch a game of billiards, you would often feel a pressure at your elbow, and find that a lad had silently come close to you, simply to feel the presence of a friend beside him. It is this that explains the difficulty of securing open order for a charge, the soldier's instinct being to get nearer and nearer to each other in spite of their clearly reasoned knowledge of the danger of close order. A tale is actually told of a boy crawling back wounded and alone across No Man's Land, who found the body of a dead companion, and lay down and slept side by side with it, in relief and comfort. Apart from any such physical contact, it will be conceded by all who have studied the facts, that the strongest and most compelling motive at the front was the remembrance of mates and the sense of loyalty to them. In some cases this was

drawn out by the love of some particular friend or friends. In other cases it was more general, and might include the dead as well as the living. It was, like fatalism, a blind virtue, a desire to be true to someone to whom they were bound in honour, and who had a claim upon their loyalty.

It is well known that the object of a certain type of preaching at the front was to transfer this sense of comradeship to Jesus, or rather to include Him in it as the Great Mate. In estimating the worth of this presentation, great carefulness is needed, for it is easy to exaggerate both its value and its defect. It may be safely estimated that while a small number of men had had no Christian training of any kind, the great majority had from their childhood many associations with the name of Jesus Christ. Either in the home or in the Sunday school they had received some Christian teaching, and the popular hymns were familiar to them. But in later years much of all that had faded away, and the recollections of these things seemed to come from far. The conception which they had of Jesus was of something antique, as of a figure in a stained-glass window. He belonged to ecclesiastical history and interests, and shared the sense of solemn ineffectiveness which they had associated with mediæval things. For them He was, as it were, pre-Raphaelite, and consequently He was entirely out of the line of their daily life. Some of them had come to hold definitely antagonistic views of Him, and were strongly prejudiced against Him. Some looked on Him as a weak dreamer, others as a relentless judge. To some He was a theological fiction, to others the representative of the leisured classes and of social privilege.

This is, to those who know Him as He is, a most lamentable and distressing state of affairs. Behind it lies far more than these men's private experience. To the early disciples Jesus was the most winsome and friendly

of presences. The story of His life has in it much of the simplest and most unconventional comradeship; and early Christianity, both in its worship and in its art, caught the gladness and freedom of His spirit. With Constantine and the adoption of Christianity by the Empire a new order of things began. The splendour of churches, the arrogance of churchmen, and the pomp of services, all conspired to denaturalise the thought of Christ. The intense and ghastly emphasis laid upon the horrors of the crucifixion further isolated Him, for "the tortured are exiles." Monastic asceticism, turning men's consciences away from healthy and natural thoughts about all things, did the same for the thought of Jesus, whom the ascetics claimed as one of themselves; while churchmen, consciously or unconsciously, encouraged the idea that He was to be regarded as the head of the clerical party. Meanwhile, as we have already seen, theology (which has always been especially dogmatic in its definition of the person of Christ) completed the alienation. In the Roman Church one result was the worship of the Virgin Mary. Dr. Fisher, of this University, has admirably stated the case: "To her, and in a less degree to the saints, the common Christians looked for that mediatorial sympathy which they dared not seek from the Christ whose humanity seemed lost in His exaltation." Concerning this Leckie has coined his striking phrase, "The desire of a human God." The orthodoxy of the Reformed Church was very zealous in its attack on the worship of Mary, and on all statues, pictures, and other works of art which were in any way connected with her. It was not always equally careful to inquire into the human reasons for that loving worship, nor to supply any other conception of divine tenderness which might take the place of that which it banned. Thus for many centuries there has been rising from many hearts, side by side with the psalms and hymns of the Church's liturgy, the cry of an-

other Mary, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

To all this long and unhappy history of estrangement, great numbers of the men who have been fighting for us had fallen heirs, and Christ had either never been, or had ceased to be, among the realities and forces of their lives. In the war many of them have discovered or rediscovered Him as an actual part of their world. He has become clearly personal and friendly. Their own needs have recalled Him, and their own experiences, throwing a new light on His story, have made Him familiar. He has, as it were, taken them into His confidence, and shown them what He did and how He felt on this same earth which has been proving so strange a place for them. On wayside crucifixes powdered with drifting snow, the passing soldier, as he shivered by, recognised "a brother born for adversity," and remembered that it was said of Him that "in all their afflictions He was afflicted."

It is probable that most men are aware, at least at times, of a mysterious unseen companion whose presence haunts them faintly, and yet mitigates the pain and fear of loneliness. Unidentified, this *alter ego* is at least friendly rather than hostile, but is too vague to be of much service in the practical and moral perplexities of life. To such men there came the sudden identification of that unseen companion with Jesus. He who had been so distant and so ineffective broke on them with the surprise of Christ,—"familiar, condescending, patient, free," —and they recognised Him as they sang their favourite hymns. In the ancient church of Aquileia there is a newly carved head of Christ, known as "The Christ of the trenches." It was carved by an artist of high talent, and he took for his model the face and head of a comrade lying dead beside him in the trench. It is in white marble, and the expression is indescribably human in its appeal, while tears still linger below the lashes of the eyes,

newly closed in death. That is Jesus the Mate, and the rediscovered humanity was passionately felt. At a certain sleeping-hut beside a railhead, a man was speaking to troops who had newly arrived late in the night, to sleep there before going up into the fighting line next morning. The light was dim, and the two or three hundred figures lying weary and silent in the bunks and on the floor had evidently drawn out a passionate sympathy in the speaker's heart. He spoke of Jesus Christ the Brother, who understood and loved each man of them, and remembered just how it felt to be as they were. The silence was tense, and the mingled awe and tenderness were such that when he closed his prayer he did not say "Amen," but simply "Good-night, Jesus." Long afterwards, some of those who survived spoke of that incident as one that had made a permanent mark upon their lives. The daring words expressed exactly that which it was in their hearts to say. A friend of my own passing through the shaded ward of a hospital, heard from the bed of a dying soldier the words, "Water! Water!" He went and brought the water, and the lad panted out the broken words, "That was Jesus Christ. I asked Him for water—and He brought it to me. God never lets a fellow down."

This phenomenon has been criticised for its moral insufficiency, and the slightness of the relations which it establishes with Christ. It seems to ally itself with the sympathetic but feeble God proclaimed by Mr. H. G. Wells and others, who suffers with men but is helpless to overcome the causes of their suffering. Anything that calls itself God must be *able* as well as friendly—able to save to the uttermost. "In humanising God we have dwarfed Him. The God of many prayers and sermons is a companionable Deity to whom men approach unawed. . . . This 'heavenly pal' (if one may be pardoned the expression) is so good that He can be counted on to do all He can to help us with a world that has gone to pieces;

but one is not convinced that He is competent for so gigantic a task as its complete rebuilding."[1] This is eminently true and just, and it warns us against a kind of teaching which is both shallow and dangerous, confounding the love of God with a kind of infinite but futile good nature. But the Divine Mate of the soldier is not the God of *Mr. Britling,* still less the Jesus of *First and Last Things.* From any such impotence the conception of Christ is defended by the soldier's fatalism, which implies an almighty will and purpose as well as a tender compassion.

Yet, on the other hand, the conception is incomplete until we have taken into consideration its most direct consequence. We have already noted how strongly the sense of honour was developed in the soldiers. That sense of honour was generally directed towards their mates. I remember asking a lad employed in the bakeries at a base, whether he would be glad to go back to the trenches. His answer was, "Well, not exactly, but we would all be glad to get back beside our mates; why should they be there while we are safe back here?" That was certainly a general attitude. The mate relationship included an unconquerable instinct and conscience of playing the game by one's mates. It is perhaps not too much to say that the sense of honour was found in the idea of comradeship more than even in that of love.

This sense of honour can be applied to the relationship of men with Christ. Among the students in Edinburgh, I have found it to be by far the strongest appeal for character and nobility. It is a sound appeal, and draws forth the highest elements in men. For His sake, even if He be very imperfectly realised,—even if it be but the desire to be fair to *someone* who has a claim upon their honour,—most healthy-minded young men will do much and surrender much. But the Christ of the trenches was

[1] *In a Day of Social Rebuilding,* p. 209.

far more to many men than merely a vague "someone." Matthew Arnold has said of Him: "Not less important than the teachings given by Jesus is the *temper* of the giver, His temper of sweetness and reasonableness." "The character and discourse of Jesus Christ possess . . . two signal powers, mildness and sweet reasonableness. The latter, the power which so puts before our view duty of every kind as to give it the force of an intuition, as to make it seem—to make the total sacrifice of our ordinary self seem—the most simple, natural, winning, necessary thing in the world."[1] Few of the soldiers, doubtless, had ever read these words; yet there was something at the front which constantly reminded one of the passage. Faulty as their achievement may have often been, yet the thought of Jesus as Mate did carry with it a desire to keep honour with Him.

3. *Sacrifice.* No one can think of Jesus without being brought face to face with the problem of sacrifice, and it is in the soldiers' constant experience of sacrifice that the process from experience to faith reaches its most distinct and familiar phase. To many young men in ordinary times life is practically without sacrifice. In the absence of any clear call for it, they take the line of least resistance, and the natural love of comfort and of pleasure is the predominant motive of their daily lives. With the call to arms, hundreds of thousands of such young men, neither more nor less selfish than their neighbours, suddenly chose and accepted a life of supreme and daily self-sacrifice. It was now a thing not to be avoided as formerly, but to be expected and endured. We have already referred to the discomforts of the campaign—the noise, the mud, the wet clothes, the broken sleep. As you watched a group of them returning from the trenches, "you saw in their exhausted frames and tired eyes the

[1] *Essays in Criticism,* ii. p. 263.

symbol of their sacrifice."[1] Entering a dugout newly taken from the Germans on one of the ridges, I was stifled by the foul air, and said something sympathetic to the man on the clay bed beside me. His answer was, "This! This is paradise to what we've been through before we took the ridge." Add to this the constant call to face atrocious danger, and the pain of wounds while they lay untended on the field. Then remember the thousands who have gone with open eyes to certain death, to hold an outpost or to save a company; and the many instances of officers and men who have thrown themselves upon live bombs that they might save their neighbours by the sacrifice of their own lives, or in other ways have deliberately given their lives for others. The most astonishing fact about it all was the small amount of positive belief which they seemed to hold. One used to feel that to do their work would require all the faith one had, and strain it almost to the breaking point. But, apparently without any such support, they went in thousands unhesitatingly into the depths of sacrifice. If one is astonished at the absoluteness of the sacrifice upon so slender a capital of faith, one also is assured that they must have discovered some strengthening secret in the adventure.

The discovery was, perhaps, seldom formulated, but it was felt. It was that somehow or other the sacrifice was worth while, and that all high adventure and all real greatness of spirit reveal sacrifice as an element deep in the heart of things, an integral part of life. They never knew *that,* in the days when it was a trial if a man broke his pipe or found the elevator service out of order. Now they knew that there had been something lacking in those easy days, which made their present life with all its horrors a richer and a greater thing. They discovered the fact that the centre of their flag is a blood-red cross. The Union Jack proclaims by that cross the fact that sacrifice

[1] Patten, *The Decoration of the Cross.*

is at the heart of all great ideals. Patriotism without it is empty boasting; love without it is but self-indulgence. It lies behind all the discoveries of science, and it is essential to all great art. We knew these things in an abstract kind of way before, as pious but strictly theoretical opinions, but we did not realise them nor bring them often to the test of practice. Now we know that whether the earth be small or great "it is always great enough, provided it gives us a stage for suffering and for love." So the meaning of pain is changed, and we learn to forgive it. Not that many soldiers would tell of "the joys of renunciation." That is beyond them, as it is beyond most of us. It may be true for some who have time for long meditation. But the soldier does not meditate in such hours; he has other things to do. This, however, he does discover, that sacrifice is not a cruel and wanton injury imposed upon mankind, but part of the essential structure of human life. He discovers that sacrifice is inherent in all that is best, and that you find your life when you throw it away. In more senses than one, Britain has been reborn through sacrifice.

To many of those men their own sufferings have given their first understanding glimpse of the cross and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It was appropriate and suggestive that in the plain little hall to which the British Commander-in-Chief went each Sunday to worship, a medallion on the wall displayed the cross of Constantine with its inscription, *"In hoc signo vinces."* Crosses and crucifixes were everywhere, and the soldiers understood their meaning with an altogether new insight. The Cross of Christ has many meanings, some of them mysterious beyond all explaining. But one thing is plain and easy to be understood. It is the revelation that there is sacrifice in the heart of God Himself. In that Cross we see not one historic event only, but a perpetual element in human history. All the pain of the world, all its shame and suffering, are

found here in the heart of God. We are for ever discoving new meanings in the Cross—the tall Cross, standing erect amid the wreckage of centuries; the austere Cross, restraining the sins of the generations; the mighty Cross, commanding the activities and the destiny of the world; the divine Cross, with its foot in the hell of man's transgressions and its head in the heaven of God's forgiveness. But the war has revealed it most especially as the human Cross, whereon God came to the side of sinful and suffering man, and man found God nearer to him than all his griefs, nearer than his very sins.

It is in this way that many soldiers have discovered for themselves the Cross of Calvary. "I can write of what I have seen and know," says Mr. Patten in *The Decoration of the Cross.* "I can speak of what I have learned after nearly two years at the front, and I can bear this testimony: the army is full of men who are living their lives in the very spirit of Christ, the spirit of sacrifice. . . . Calvary is visible from every point in the front. . . . I have been amazed to discover how few soldiers fail to understand the Cross of Christ. They have borne a cross themselves—the cross of hardship, loneliness, and pain—and when . . . you speak about the sacrifice of Christ their eyes fill with tears, for they know what you mean. Every battlefield commands a view of Calvary's hill." In a true sense they have been "crucified with Christ" and have been called upon "to fill up what was behind in the afflictions of Christ in their flesh." They have trodden the *Via dolorosa,* and have found high company there, for there they have met with that great Brother who trod it first alone. The reasons that have brought them to it are, in part, the same as those which, in an infinitely greater sense, brought Him—witness to the truth, love of men, and the sin of the world. A friend has told me how, walking along a trench, he saw a boy resting in his khaki overcoat. He spoke a friendly word, but received no an-

swer. Stooping down, he saw the thin red line of blood upon the face, that told its own story. "Then," he said, "with an overwhelming rush the words swept over me, 'This is my body, which is broken for you.'" In a thunder-storm near Abbeville a soldier was killed in his tent by lightning. Quite near the tent there was an iron crucifix with decorative tracery, and on the boy's breast they found an exact impression of it. That boy is in a sense symbolic of them all. The stigmata of St. Francis were not more truly the gift of God than was the seal of the Cross upon these men's souls. Some few of them have received the Victoria Cross; many thousands have received the little white wooden cross that marks the graves of fallen heroes; many have received, in a new revelation of their own lives and of Christ's death, the Decoration of the Cross.

It is for us to interpret to them the meaning of their own experience. Without knowing it, they are bearing in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus; it is ours to let them know. It has often been remarked with astonishment how much of the faithful preaching of the Cross has failed to make an impression upon those who heard it. The reason is partly to be found in the fact that it has often been preached without emotion, and it is a message which ought never to be given except with passion. The preaching of the Cross will never be convincing so long as it is dispassionate. It is only when the fire of the Cross burns in the preacher's breast, and illuminates the whole field of life and death, that it will spread and kindle other fires. Apart from the question of its effectiveness there is a personal consideration for the preacher here. It is always dangerous—morally and spiritually dangerous—to look on and discuss from a safe distance the agony and sacrifice of another, who is suffering for things that are precious to oneself. The oftener a preacher does it, the deader does

his heart become and the weaker his preaching. On the other hand, we must remember that the preaching of the Cross has suffered from lack of experience in the hearers as well as from lack of passion in those who preached. It left them cold because they did not know by experience anything of what it meant. Now they are in a position to understand better what Christ did, because of what they themselves have been doing. His sufferings and His motives alike have grown familiar, and they find much of the strangeness gone from the story of His death. They are ready to find in His Cross both companionship and shelter, when, for the redeeming of the world from menacing powers of evil, they are taking up their own cross, and following Him in sacrifice.

4. *Death.* The effect of the war upon the popular conception of death presents one of the most unexpected and most deeply interesting of psychological phenomena. In the lands and homes from which the soldiers went out to the war, the death of so many of the dearest and best is felt as the bitterest tragedy in the history of the world. The sense of loss and of immeasurable waste is appalling, and questionings which challenge faith arise on all sides. The utter indiscriminateness of the slaughter is perhaps the obscurest and most deplorable aspect of the case. The most brilliant spirits and lovable personalities lie side by side with the lowest and coarsest. And God, who has taught us to discriminate between these, has not Himself discriminated. And then, the lost influence of the noblest impoverishes not the present only, but the future as well. The generations to come will miss the priceless heritage of their genius, as the present generation will miss the inspiration of their lives.

That is the view of death seen from afar, but at the front it was not so. There, where death was so familiar, a very surprising change came upon its aspect. Before the war, when these soldiers were civilians, they shared

the common sentiments and conceptions of death. It was an exceptional occurrence, that came upon rare occasions with a spectral stride into the homes of the living. It seemed an outlandish thing, about which mysterious horrors gathered. Often these sentiments were reinforced by homeless and uncanny imaginations of the dim hereafter, presenting to the crude imagination of the survivors visions of a dull heaven or a grotesque hell. At the war death became familiar. Every day they looked into his eyes and heard the rattle of his loaded dice. In every graveyard, at the end of the row of graves already occupied by their comrades, there was the long deep trench dug and waiting for the next comers. In the trenches they many a time looked through their periscopes to the enemy lines across ground strewn with ungathered corpses. When they returned to the billets behind, it was to a region where crosses were thick among the newly sprung green as daisies on a lawn.

The effect of all this was in the highest degree surprising. One might have expected that the horror of death would be intensified to an inconceivable extent, but it was not so. Death seemed to have overshot his mark, and to have been found out and unmasked. It was not that they grew merely callous and accustomed. They did not want to die any more than they had done before. Yet the fear of death had vanished. It was on the rarest occasions that one found any trace of it. It was as if all the ghastly shadows had suddenly fled away, and left men's minds quiet and natural in full view of death. For they had discovered that they did not believe in its finality. Apart altogether from religious faith, they had the firm conviction that all does not end at the grave, but that those who die are still alive somewhere, still active and aware. The horizons of this mortal life had somehow swept out and widened, so that death was seen to be but an incident in the larger life, an episode in a

man's career. A young officer of my acquaintance was killed in France. Three days later his sister dreamed that she saw him sitting in a mess-room with his fellow-officers, evidently in the highest of spirits. "Why, Dick," she said to him, "I thought you were dead." "Dead!" he shouted, tossing back his head with a hearty laugh. "No, we're not dead; we're only waiting for new uniforms." Nothing could more perfectly express the view of death I have known as general at the front. In fact, they discovered a great natural conviction, not reasoned out but instinctive, the conviction of the certainty of a future life. The poor clay, about to be wrapped in its black blanket, was "not him." He was elsewhere, but he was still alive. Thus the violent storms and tensions of the war had cleared the air, and revealed to men their intuitive knowledge of their immortality, in the form of an intense and definite personal assurance.

The same effect has been produced, not universally but widely, among those who have been bereaved. "In each of our houses there lives and reigns a young dead man in the glory of his strength."[1] The heaven of which we think to-day is not the heaven of five years ago. It is full of young men whom we know and love. Thomas Aquinas believed that the dead are all of the age at which Christ died, the old going back, and the children forward, to that period of life. It is some such heaven as this that we feel to be above us now. And most of us are surer of it than we were before, having also learned in our degree to view life as a larger whole than formerly we did, a whole in which death is included but as an incident in life. Death has made such a demonstration of his power and sovereignty over us as he never made before in all the centuries; and the astonishing result is, a countless multitude of men and women are surer of immortality to-day than they were in 1913.

[1] Maeterlinck.

So far, we have been dealing only with the belief in immortality apart from religion. The belief in a future life has disclosed itself at the seat of war as a fundamental element in human nature, an instinctive conviction of the soul of man. But that is obviously not enough. When the trials which disclosed it are over, men will forget, and lose it among the absorbing interests of the world. To really grasp and hold it, so that it will master and inspire us amid the passing shows of life, we must enter the larger world of the spiritual and get in among the powers of the eternal life. But the only key to that eternal life is in the hands of Jesus Christ. It was He who grasped and embodied in Himself the larger conception of life as a whole. It was He who proclaimed the essentially incidental character of death, calling it but a sleep. It was He who for all mortals made the great venture, and came back to reinforce our native instinct with the assurance that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Him. Towards that Christian faith in immortality the soldier's discovery of his immortality is but a step, but it is a very great and important step. It is for us as preachers to take full advantage of the advance he has already made, and to show the further advance which it involves.

5. *Resurrection.* It would be difficult to name a doctrine which, in the theological statement of it, had less interest or even meaning for soldiers. The stories of the resurrection of our Lord are very beautiful, but they are out of the sphere of the ordinary man's experience. And the ordinary man knows that for the scholar they present points of serious difficulty in detail which divide expert opinion. But the vital centre of the doctrine is the assurance that Jesus lived again after He had been crucified, that He took means to convince men of that fact, and that He lives now and for ever. The Christian Church rose upon that profound conviction. Death had in Him

been conquered by life: He was the Conqueror, and His victory was for all mankind.

Further, the experience of Jesus must be regarded typically as well as historically. The story told in the closing chapters of the Evangelists is not a mere series of events. These events stand for certain great processes which repeat themselves in human experience age after age. Religious development is never a smooth evolution, but an alternation of dying and rising from the dead. Calvary and then resurrection is the method of God in history. They are even the method of God in nature. The evening and the morning are the first day and every succeeding day. The death of the year in winter and the resurrection of the spring, are the material out of which the pagan religions arose, both in the East and in the West. Now it so happens that we have lived through the greatest and most significant epoch of the world's history since Christ died in Jerusalem, and the tragedy of Calvary has been repeated under our eyes. What is to be the resurrection for this Calvary of the latter days?

Turn with me back to the huts, the tents, the dugouts of the front. Let us walk among them through the night, and listen as we pass. "Revolution," "Wages," "Labour," "Housing," "Education," "Syndicalism"—these are the words you will hear. Everywhere through the dark men are straining their eyes for a glimpse of the new world beyond the war. Some are thinking hard; some are talking wildly; all are listening eagerly. Some of them are grim and angry; others are full of hope. For the joy that is set before them they are enduring the cross. But all of them are aware of the dawn. The night is dark, but the quiver of morning light is in their blood. The one thing absolutely agreed on is that the future of their land shall be different from what the past has been. In the words of one of themselves, "We don't want to sacrifice ourselves without some good coming to those we leave

behind us." Say what you will about the wisdom or unwisdom of this opinion or that, the fact remains that these opinions are things you will have to reckon with in the immediate future.

That future will be either disastrous or splendid according as it is Christless or Christian. The alternative is, Revolution or the Kingdom of God. Some of its detailed problems we shall consider in a future lecture entitled "The Preacher as Statesman." Meanwhile, I would merely point out to you that it is our part to interpret it, both to soldiers and to civilians, and to do what we can to ensure that the reborn world of to-morrow shall be a world of righteousness and love, and not a world of hatred and of blood. The soldier who has discovered Calvary has also discovered the resurrection, if you will so interpret to him his just aspirations. If he rise with Christ, he will seek those things that are above. In the ruined and roofless church of Dickebusch, all the inscriptions on the walls are shot away except one. It is a little plaster circlet remaining intact above the shattered altar, and it reads, *"Instaurare omnia in Christo."* That is for an allegory of the war, if we have grace given to us to make it so.

It is obvious that conditions such as these must present very vital problems for the preacher. In some instances, even at the front, one learned at least how *not* to preach. It is said that upon occasions sermons were delivered to men in steel helmets upon such subjects as the transmigration of souls, or the question whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father only or from the Father and the Son. The contrast between such discourses and the experience of those who listened to them would be ludicrous if it were not so tragic and so unpardonable. So far as I was able to judge, the usual preaching in the army was human, understanding, and sympathetic, and was

valued by the soldiers as a source of strengthening and faith. The preachers avoided conventional phrases, and instead of the general appeal to "come to Jesus" they led the men up from their own needs to Him who could so abundantly supply all human need, using the spiritual conditions of the war as a basis for fuller faith.

The war has done much to make preaching effective. It has severed the artificial from the real. It has revealed the latent good underlying the lives and actions of men who had previously made no profession of religion. It has shown to many that love and not hatred is at the deep red heart of it all. In your coming into the conflict, as in their own, the soldiers of Europe have seen an overwhelming compassion for the miseries of the world. It has hinted at some further thing which would give them a further understanding of those mysterious thoughts and feelings which visited them in their hours of agony.

The task that lies before us is the fuller interpretation of all this. Christ was there, and in a strange tenderness of heart many of them knew it. But who is this Christ? and what is the meaning of all those things that have led them to turn towards Him? What is involved in it, and what is to make it effective in their future lives? Point by point they have been unconsciously finding their way back in the direction of Christian faith, "led blindfold through the glimmering camp of God." Our opportunity could not be greater. It is for each one of us to discover for himself how he may best enter into its responsibility and grasp its meaning in detail.

In one respect especially Christ must be interpreted—in His demand for character and in His view of sin. The sense of sin in the soldier's creed is by no means sufficiently intelligent or strong. Sometimes one is met by the complaint that we are given too much to "downing them with sin," and general accusations of sinfulness are undoubtedly resented. The flaw in their armour will prob-

ably be found most frequently in connection with the view of Christ as Comrade, in the thought of honour towards Him, and in a deeper understanding of His sacrifice for sin. The more fully they grasp the reality of His love, and especially of His sacrifice, the more they will realise the poverty of their response. Every now and then one found conscience vividly alive beneath an apparent callousness and indifference. An appeal to conscience was sure of an answer so long as it was given in a manly and a loving spirit. The blue smoky atmosphere of the hut would clear, and the silence grow intense, while such words went home; and as they passed out into the night the strong pressure of their hand-grip meant that the straight talk had been welcome. Such moments revealed in a very wonderful way the power of the Cross to cleanse from sin. To that great mystery of Atonement the conscience-stricken boys would turn with passionate eagerness, and find peace. The lack of any adequate sense of sin has been often noted, but in this respect also there is certainly no lack of opportunity.

## *LECTURE V*

### *The Preacher as Expert*

A CRITICISM which deserves the most serious attention from ministers is that which accuses our profession, as contrasted with most others, of being essentially a non-expert one. George Eliot launched her famous attack against this real or supposed characteristic, in language which, however violent and unjust we may consider it, may yet be of high value to us all as a warning. "Given a man with moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence, and great glibness of speech, what is the career in which, without the aid of birth or money, he may most easily attain power and reputation in English Society? Where is that Goschen of Mediocrity in which a smattering of science and learning will pass for profound instruction, where platitudes will be accepted as wisdom, bigoted narrowness as holy zeal, unctuous egotism as God-given piety? Let such a man become an evangelical preacher; he will then find it possible to reconcile small ability with great ambition, superficial knowledge with the prestige of erudition, a middling morale with a high reputation for sanctity."[1]

Mr. H. G. Wells has written: "When the intellectual history of this time comes to be written, nothing, I think, will stand out more strikingly than the empty gulf in quality between the superb and richly fruitful scientific investigations that are going on, and the general thought of other educated sections of the community. I do not mean that the scientific men are as a whole a class of

[1] *Essays,* "Evangelical Teaching, Dr. Cumming."

super-men, dealing with and thinking about everything in a way altogether better than the common run of humanity; but that, in their own field, they think and work with an intensity, an integrity, a breadth, boldness, patience, thoroughness, and faithfulness that (excepting only a few artists) puts their work out of all comparison with any other human activity."[1]

Robert Louis Stevenson, in words now fortunately familiar, has reminded us that "The tenacity of many ordinary people in ordinary pursuits is a sort of standing challenge to everybody else. If one man can grow absorbed in delving his garden, others may grow absorbed and happy over something else. Not to be upsides in this with any groom or gardener is to be very meanly organised. A man should be ashamed to take his food if he has not alchemy enough in his stomach to turn some of it into intense and enjoyable occupation."[2]

These three quotations seem to me to be of the highest value for the consideration and for the conscience of every preacher. They remind him of the experts in other callings, and they press the question with merciless insistence, In what is he an expert? In the war this matter of expertness was put to the proof. The padre was traditionally regarded by a certain type of officer as a kind of extra man, expert only in the arrangement and conducting of parade services, and by no means sure to be expert even in that. Everything else required exact knowledge and technical training of a highly specialised kind. His job alone could be performed by anybody who liked to try it, at the first attempt. As a serious contributor to the real business of the war he simply did not count. This way of thinking was a direct challenge to every man of spirit among the regular or temporary army chaplains, and it was not long before they had refuted and silenced

[1] *Marriage*, p. 260.
[2] *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, p. 104.

it. No class of officer along the whole line can claim more indisputably to have "made good" than they. They made a place for themselves among the urgent necessities of the war, and they won the respect of officers and men alike, as experts in the conception and execution of their duties.

In contrasting the work of the clergyman with that of the expert scientist or of the technically skilled workman, one obvious consideration is apt to be overlooked. The antithesis to expertness is discursiveness, and it is because the work and thought of most of us have to be scattered over a wide field of human interests that we are supposed necessarily to be inexpert. In the case of the majority, that is necessarily true, and we need not be ashamed frankly to admit it. The Roman Catholic Church indeed sets apart men who are found to have highly specialised powers, for work along restricted lines. They are thus enabled to devote all their attention to these, and become expert preachers, missioners, organisers, or diplomatists. It is a wise arrangement, and we of the Protestant churches would find it to our advantage to adopt it far more widely than we do. It has, however, the undeniable disadvantage, that the various departments of ministerial work afford each other mutual aid. The preacher who is a mere preacher will never preach so well as he would if he mingled pastorally with the lives of men. Indeed, even the narrowest conception of the office of the Christian ministry must include a large variety of responsibilities and duties. Religion is not an exact science in the same sense that chemistry is. The minister's work, therefore, cannot be expert in the same sense as a chemist's work can be, nor indeed in the same sense as a gardener's (to quote Stevenson's example). In St. Paul's striking phrase, "all sorts of wisdom" are required for preaching.[1]

[1] Colossians i. 28.

Yet there is such a thing as expertness for the ordinary preacher. Just as there are those in medicine who specialise and are consultants in general practice, so the preacher can and ought to know his business in a way which may be accurately described as expert. If he applies his thought studiously to the various departments of his work, and if he relates those various departments to each other; if he states clearly to himself what the objects of his preaching are, and devotes his powers to the securing of these objects; he will have the fullest right to the name of expert, although he be no specialist in any one branch of his profession. As a matter of fact, such is the case; and while we feel about some preachers that they do not know their business, we feel equally strongly about others that they do. But it is very difficult to express this in rules of direction. There is not, and there never can be, any complete or satisfactory manual of preaching. Some hints may be given to one from the experience of another, and a few rules may be laid down. But such rules must be elementary at the best. The teacher of homiletics will guard men from mistaken methods, and train them for average work as preachers. But he who would scale the heights or break new paths in unexplored territory must do it for himself with little aid from any instructor. The achievement of excellence of any high grade in preaching must be the adventure of the man's own individual genius, and in reaching it the preacher may break every rule that can be laid down. Yet here let me add this word of warning. Such departure from rules is not for the beginner, and can be nothing but a danger and a snare to him. "There is all the difference in the world between departure from recognised rules by one who has learned to obey them, and neglect of them through want of training, or want of skill, or want of understanding. Before you can be eccentric you must know where the circle is."[1]

[1] Ellen Terry, *Life*, p. 91.

The "art of preaching" is a phrase which makes me shudder. Sometimes in proposing a vote of thanks after an address, in which one has poured forth his soul in unreserved and passionate appeal, a kindly chairman will speak of one's words as "eloquent." No epithet—I had almost said epitaph—could possibly grieve one more, or brand one's earnestness with the mark of failure. The only consolation is that the chairman may have had a limited vocabulary, and may have been in the habit of using "eloquent" to characterise all kinds of praiseworthy discourse. If the word was really meant, the speaker may well examine himself: for any preaching which makes upon any man the general impression chiefly of eloquence, is bad preaching. Preaching is indeed an art, but of all arts it is the one of which the maxim is most true, *Summa ars celare artem.* Any art that there is in preaching can only be tolerable as a means to an end, and the test of it is the measure in which the means is concealed and the end made prominent. "Show me your muscles," says Epictetus. "Here are my dumb-bells," replies the athlete. "Begone with your dumb-bells," replies Epictetus; "what I want to see is not them but their effect."[1] Thus "the teacher must begin where he must end, with practice."[2] Otherwise his utterances will not be "the spontaneous outflow of a prophet's soul, but the artistic periods of a rhetorician."[3]

Conscious art in preaching is doubly dangerous. It is dangerous to the preacher. It has been said of Lord Ellenborough that he had "a sincere love for justice, but a stronger love for antithesis."[4] Such a state of mind in the preacher obviously distracts his attention from the main purpose of his work. We have enumerated three

[1] Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures,* vi.
[2] *Ibid.* vii.
[3] *Ibid.* xii.
[4] Justin M'Carthy, *History of Our Own Times,* iii. 14.

chief objects of preaching, viz. Testimony, Education, and Appeal. But none of these three objects can be rightly attained, so long as the preacher is also aiming at creating an impression by his art. That can never be a legitimate object of preaching, and it has ruined many an able sermon. It reaches its climax in the endeavour to compose and deliver an epoch-making sermon. We have all known the minister who has preached one great sermon and has never recovered from it. Dr. Joseph Parker used to pour scorn upon all such endeavours, telling us in his own inimitable way to regard our epoch-making sermon as "the epoch-making rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built."

But sermons which reveal the art with which they are composed are equally dangerous with respect to those who listen to them. It is of first importance to remind ourselves of the reasons why many of our hearers come to hear us, of the things they want to hear, and the causes which lead them to regard certain men as "popular preachers." Hatch's Lectures are full of the most startling suggestion as to this, in their descriptions of those long sermons of the sophists that were delivered for the sake of the applause they drew, and of preachers who gave men not what was good for them but what they liked to hear. He reaches his climax in the account of Gregory Nazianzus' greatest sermon, where his audience was so wedded to its search for art and not for conviction, that he broke forth in despair in his closing sentence, "Farewell—ye are nearly all of you unfaithful to God," which the congregation greeted with a final outburst of applause.[1] The late Principal Rainy gives a searching list of things which draw unchristian men to Christianity: "What draws to Christianity those who prove to be enemies of the Cross of Christ?" and he goes on to quote "family and social influences," "intellectual interest,"

[1] *Hibbert Lectures,* iv.

"the sense of truth and reality," "devout emotions," "veneration for some features of the Christian character," "the very goodness of Christian truth and life." "Who has not known kindly, serviceable men, hanging about the churches with a real predilection for the suburban life of Zion—men regarding whom it made the heart sore to form any adverse judgment, and yet men whose life seemed just to omit the Cross of Christ?"[1] An older preacher, Mr. Stewart of Aberdeen, delivered a remarkable sermon in which he exposed the same dangerous element in congregations as it existed in Early Victorian days. The text is Ezekiel xxxiii. 32, "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." He points out that as an object, in itself disagreeable, becomes pleasing on canvas, so unpleasant truths may be made interesting by choice language and expression, by play of imagination, description of natural objects, trains of reasoning and analysis, calm and well-arranged statements suitable to cultivated minds—even by pathos, sincerity, and earnestness. "Like a jurist who in prison studies in mute admiration the system of laws by which he is to die; like a chemist who with professional interest, ardour, and delight, examines the properties of the poison that is killing him"; so does such a hearer systematise terrific truths with all the complacency of a child building bricks. "Having entrenched himself in the habit of abstract thinking and of viewing everything apart from its relations to himself, the sinner soon acquires a taste for strong statements and even harrowing representations and appeals, and will modify and adapt your message, and then approve it as a faithful saying."[2] One must remember also, that besides the ungodly and hypocritical, there are those surfeited

[1] *Commentary on Philippians,* 285, 286.
[2] Stewart, *Remains.*

people who have, through long habit, developed the professional sermon-taster's craving for religious meetings and addresses, and who are out not for edification, but for criticism and comparison with other preaching. With all this in view, one turns to the art of preaching rather sadly, to remind oneself that that art must not be interpreted as pleasing the audience or pandering to its tastes, but of educating it and striking home direct blows upon its conscience; and that the first advice to give to anyone who aspires to the holy ministry must be, Do not try to be a popular preacher, try only to be an honest man. I think John Bunyan must have felt something of the dangers which we have been describing when he wrote the last pages of the First Part of his *Pilgrim's Progress*. He had brought the pilgrimage to a successful and exquisite close. As a work of art nothing could have added to its perfection. Then he deliberately ruined it by the final passage about the fate of Ignorance. As mere literary art, nothing could possibly have been worse or more reprehensible. Had the writer, we wonder, perceived that his art was so perfect as to be in danger of defeating its own object? By *tour de force* he recalled his readers to the tremendous message in whose service the art had been employed, and summoned their consciences to attention by putting his foot through his newly finished canvas.

All this has been directed against conscious or apparent art in preaching. Further, it may be added that, even as regards technique, there is no one universal model to which all preaching must conform. It will differ according to the temperament, the taste, and the gifts of the preacher. Being the voice of man's free spirit in one of its exalted moods, it cannot be reduced to any set of technical rules. Even in painting, all that can be taught is in the region of technique. Beyond that the artist must be left free for self-expression, and must "let his

ghost him lead." I have lingered upon this and repeated it because of its extreme importance. Any preaching which is wholly constructed upon rules is preaching in irons; but "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Yet rules there are, and if a man is going to preach at all, it is better that he should preach well, even in the technical sense. The technique of preaching is given to no man by instinct, and the preacher who will in the end most daringly depart from such rules as there are, must serve a diligent apprenticeship in the drudgery of learning and obeying them. We shall now turn to the consideration of some of these.

The first matter to be considered is of course the preparation of material out of which sermons may be constructed as the occasions for them arise. That such stores of material should be prepared, can admit of no question. He who makes no preparation, gives up habits of study, and comes each week to the task of gathering a sufficient number of thoughts about a text to form a sermon, is on the sure way to failure. The scribe whom Christ praises brings forth things new and old, but he brings them forth *out of his treasury*. The scribe without a treasury will find the production either of old things or new a very embarrassing business. He will soon break his spirit in the weekly raking of commentaries and scrambling among half-remembered ideas, until the preparation of sermons becomes for him a nightmare rather than a delight.

There is, of course, his own experience to draw from, but crude experiences form a very insufficient basis for preaching. What is wanted is experience playing upon the material of ideas which are to be presented to the congregation in connection with the subject for the day. These ideas must be gathered in reading and in study. As to what a man should read, that is a question which will depend very much upon his particular type of mind.

Some men will choose the great classics for their intellectual food, others will feel impelled to keep in touch with the contemporary output of new literature, so far as that is within their power. Each is necessary and valuable, and it will be well for all of us to aim at a combination of the two. Besides one's serious reading, old and new, there will be a certain amount of lighter reading done for relaxation, and even that may be an aid to preaching. It will keep us in touch with the literature which is the staple reading of many in our congregations, and it will often supply ideas, suggestions, and illustrations which will enrich our sermon work.

It is well worth while to consider seriously what books we should read. His message will be given to a man, in part at least, by his studies; and still more it will take its general tone, style, and character from these. Above all, of course, there is the Bible itself, and no preacher can without peril neglect its systematic study. But in an age like this we need to read much else besides. "No man," says Matthew Arnold, "who knows nothing else, knows even his Bible."[1] But as God's messenger comes forth from his Bible to his other books, it seems to me as if all the mighty spirits who wrote the Bible were following him with their dreadful searching eyes, to see what books he will supplement them with. Such books should be in themselves great and vital. Further, they should be suggestive books, quickening his own mind to activity rather than merely supplying him with passages or thoughts which he may borrow. The standard classics of literature, the great commentaries, the living books of theology and religion—these are the stuff for inspiration. To neglect these, and simply sit down and copy the division of a text into heads, out of some of the volumes known as "Aids to Preachers," is to sell your birthright. If your reading has been vital, you can divide

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. v.

the text far better for yourselves, if you will take the pains to try. I would even venture to warn you against the undue use of volumes of other men's sermons. These may become a temptation, and some students have made shipwreck of their character, and have even thrown away their power of honest work, by yielding to that temptation. Printed sermons may be useful if they are read after, not before, you have constructed the framework of your own discourse. It is a mistake to imagine that they teach the art of preaching to any great extent. If any of you find that you have been relying upon them too much, I would advise you to sell three-quarters of your stock of other men's sermons, and to buy books.

While it is imperative, so far as we can manage it, to read systematically, yet the reading of most of us will necessarily be to a considerable extent desultory. But orderly minds may acquire the habit of the unconscious formation of a system of thought for themselves. At the centre of a man's thinking there will be a certain number of commanding ideas, each of which will form a nucleus round which other ideas will gather. These groups of ideas will be constantly being enriched by new thoughts or aspects found casually in general reading. Thus it will happen that while the vastly larger part of such reading will fall away and be entirely forgotten, those particles of thought which have related themselves to the permanent groups within the mind of the reader will be captured and retained. I hardly know any book worthy of the name, whether religious or secular, fact or fiction, from which one or two such enriching fragments may not be gathered as you pass. It may be added as noticeable, that the great preachers have generally been students of history, and that this must ever be an appropriate field for the interpreter of human life. To get at some sort of a philosophy of history is to see the life of the heart of man writ large, and to understand something of the

ways of God with men. And if any really great poet shall make you his own, you will find that he will do not a little of your best preaching for you.

The next question that arises is that of retaining the constantly accumulating stores of material, and especially of retaining them in such a way as that they shall be available for use on appropriate occasions. For this, many devices have been invented, such as the use of interleaved Bibles, or (as in the case of Scrivener's *Synopsis Evangelica*) Bibles whose text is printed in one corner of a wide page, leaving abundant room for annotations. In Todd's *Students' Manual,* which in the early part of the nineteenth century was one of the most familiar of American books in Scotland, the most elaborate directions are given for the construction of a Commonplace Book and an Index Rerum. The former is an indexed volume in which excerpts from books are written down. The latter is an index of subjects, showing the passages in books where references to those subjects may be found. These are mechanical devices, which, if persisted in through a lifetime, would probably put blinkers upon whatever Pegasus of free spirit and vital thinking one rode. Yet they may afford valuable training, for a time at least. Many of us began the system in our youth, but in later days abandoned it for the much simpler one of unindexed notebooks of written extracts (fewer in number as life grew busier) and references. In using such notebooks it often became apparent that certain subjects had accumulated a considerable number of extracts and references. Such subjects were transferred to a new series of notebooks, each one (ledger-like) having a page to itself, and the scattered references and extracts were thus gathered in their appropriate pages. Such methods have been found helpful by some of us, although the usefulness of any particular method must depend on the habits of the man who uses it. The main things to re-

member are, that there must be behind every preacher who would preserve any opulence of thought or variety of interest in his preaching, some such treasury into which he may deposit the gains of his reading and thinking, and, that he will probably have to adopt some mechanical apparatus for making the stores of his treasury available. But let him beware of allowing any such mechanism to enter too much into his methods of work. When it becomes the master, it is wholly deadening and to be avoided; only when it is the helpful slave of his own free and forceful spirit is it useful. And besides all this, there will be times when subjects and messages will suddenly spring upon a preacher's mind, and find for themselves embodiment from the unconscious or subconscious material stored there, without any mechanical aids whatever. Such sermons will probably be his most inspiring and impressive utterances, while those of the former more laborious kind may be the more instructive.

It is in sermon-building that the art of preaching ought to be most carefully followed. The first concern here is the relation between the masses of material and the sermon which is to express these. For the sermon must assimilate these and reproduce them in another form suited to its own proper ends. It has been wisely said that the preacher should never directly preach apologetics, but should preach a message based upon apologetics. That saying is of wider application than the one department to which it refers. It is not enough to arrange and classify the various truths which it is intended that the sermon shall express. These must undergo an internal change, and become parts of a living whole, a new organism, which is the creation of the preacher and the expression of his personality. If this internal change does not take place, the sermon, composed of accumulated ideas, becomes pemmican rather than ordinary and digestible food. In using such collections, it is well to be

ruthless in cutting off all surplusage of ideas not directly relevant, and keeping them for other occasions.

The very word "sermon-building" at once suggests structure. No defect in a sermon can be so serious as the want of this. Into a Highland vestry, as the minister was preparing to enter the pulpit, there broke an unfortunate divinity student who had showed remarkable signs of genius, but whose studies had unhinged his reason, and left him a harmless but incurable lunatic. Without invitation he exclaimed, "Let us pray. O Lord, give us power, give us point, give us brevity. Amen." There was much wisdom in his madness. Power is indeed the gift of God. Brevity is in the preacher's option. But point is the quality which can be reached only by attention to structure in sermon-building. Without it, the sermon will be but a discursive meditation or medley. Such a meditation may on rare occasions be edifying, when it is desired to lead the people upon a placid wandering among religious thoughts. But, as a rule, discursiveness in a sermon is a dangerous temptation. It is the last infirmity of nimble minds. It has robbed many a sermon of its effectiveness, by depriving it of point. By structure is meant the conception in the preacher's mind of his sermon as a whole, whose parts are arranged in proper balance and subordination, with a view to leaving a certain planned impression upon mind or conscience. The framework should be logically constructed, and the subsequent filling in of the framework should preserve, and never obliterate or confuse, the structural unity and purpose of the whole. Of course the sermon-builder must beware of adopting one, or a very few, structural models, and building all his sermons on these plans. In the days when "heads" were considered essential to sermon-building, it was common to find men falling into this error. First came the Introduction; then some such triplet of categories as Source, Operation, and Consequences;

followed by the inevitable Application, and then an end. Such uniformity of structure must inevitably result in lack of interest and freshness. Even in the matter of heads there is no divine law for or against. In some discourses they may be necessary and highly valuable methods of expressing the line of thought, and imprinting it upon the memory of the hearers. In others they may interrupt and break its continuity. Even in the connecting of the sermon with its text there is room for variety. The best method must be determined by the object of the sermon. If it be educational, it will generally be found best to begin with the context and exegesis of the text, and to pass on from these to its application to life in various connections, ultimately leading up to present-day facts and experiences by way of illustration and application. If, however, the main object be appeal, it will often be more effective to begin with data of experience which have no apparent connection with the text at all, and to show a deeper meaning in these, leading back to the text in the end and thus surprising the hearers with the religious significance of the ordinary facts of their lives. Thus the structure of the sermon may vary in many different ways, but the main point is that the sermon must have structure. It is true that only one or two of the hearers may recognise the presence or absence of structure for what it is; but they will all recognise the presence or absence of point, and point is the effect of structure.

One thing more has to be considered in sermon-building. Preachers are often accused of exaggeration and one-sidedness in their presentation of truth. No doubt the criticism is in some cases just. The more earnest and enthusiastic a preacher is in his sense of the urgency and necessity for the utterance of certain truths, the more he must be on his guard to acquaint himself with all that can be said on the other side, and to treat the contrary opinion fairly. The pew has no right of reply, and any

sense of unfairness will challenge opposition in those whose point of view is different. Yet, on the other hand, it must be remembered that at its longest a sermon is but a very short opportunity for the complete discussion of any great subject, and it is better to aim, in any one sermon, at leaving an unmistakable impression, than on presenting with equal fullness both sides of a case. He who strives for perfect balance of this sort in each sermon, will find that his preaching has lost its cutting edge, and will have little effect on the consciences of men. And, after all, this sermon or that is not the only sermon you will preach. In other sermons you will have other opportunities of presenting the other side of the question you are dealing with; and it is certainly more effective to gain the just balance over the whole field of your ministry than to insist upon it in each separate discourse. As to exaggeration, while that may become a habit so pernicious as altogether to undermine the preacher's sense of veracity, and to prejudice his congregation's confidence in his truthfulness, it may also be used with legitimate and telling effect. All hyperbole is exaggeration, and Jesus Himself made very free use of hyperbole. Turner learned to paint the sun, by carefully graduating and exaggerating the darker tones of the objects on which it shone; and a similar process is often called for in our attempt to express the blinding lights and ultra-violet shadows of the spiritual and moral world. Besides, the true aim of any one sermon is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive in its treatment of its subject. One great object of preaching is to startle men and women into thinking, to suggest even by opposition, to stimulate thought even by exaggeration. There is all the difference in the world between the exaggeration which is the habit of an untruthful mind, and that which is the art of a skillful master of persuasive speech.

Reference must be made to style and delivery as es-

sential elements in the technique of preaching. In these lectures such subjects can only receive a passing glance, nor would it be possible to lay down many rules even if there were larger opportunity. For one thing, there are fashions in preaching—even local fashions—which make the ideals of style and delivery, in part at least, geographically determined. Each country develops tastes of its own in such matters, and it would be absurd to attempt to impose upon any land the canons of another. We shall not therefore linger long in this region. It belongs properly to the classrooms of rhetoric and elocution, and you may likely enough be impatient of it here. Yet what would you? It is irrational, and an affront to the majesty of the human spirit, that all its wonderful powers should be at the mercy of a microbe or a clot of blood, yet such is the way in which the world is made. A surgeon may be learned in all the literature of his subject, and expert in all its practice; yet if he be careless with his instruments, all that erudition will not save him from disaster. It is positively maddening to think of the waste and loss to the Church and the world, which are due to precisely similar causes in the ministry. Men despise these matters of technique as trivial in comparison with the greatness of their thoughts and the urgency of their message, and by doing so they condemn themeslves to a career of deepening failure, and deprive the world alike of their message and their thoughts.

Style is concerned with the manner, as contrasted with the matter, the form rather than the essence, of a man's utterance. It is true that style as much as matter—perhaps even more than matter—is given by a man's own personality, of which it is or ought to be the natural expression. Those, for instance, who blame the ruggedness of Thomas Carlyle's style, might as well call Julius Cæsar pedantic for having written his books in Latin. Carlyle was simply expressing himself, and his style was exactly

characteristic of his thought. Now if this were the case always, if every man's thought clothed itself according to its nature, there would be no need whatever for treatises on style. Unfortunately, that is not what happens in many cases. Men adopt all sorts of styles foreign alike to their personalities and to their messages. The evil of this is not only that the force of the message is deadened, and its effect weakened, by the unsuitable style in which it is expressed. There is a strong reaction from style upon matter, a direct influence which the manner of expression exercises upon the thought expressed.

Now the one thing above all others to be desired in style for preaching is naturalness. As we shall see later on, the power of preaching lies largely in its expression of the personality of the preacher. But the fullness and freedom of that expression must depend largely on the style he adopts. The clothes which a man wears have much to do with the impression he makes upon society. Fantastic clothes are only legitimate for fantastic people: for others they are a serious disadvantage. A well-dressed man is not necessarily one who has paid much for his clothes, or who has selected brilliant garments. He only is well dressed whose clothes fit him, and are such that the impression which they give of the man is characteristic of his personality. It is something of this kind at which we ought to aim in style for preaching. A lady who has moved for many years in the circle of the best orators of the Church and Parliament of Britain, discussing this subject, lamented that so many preachers who in private life are interesting and vital conversationalists, are so different in the pulpit. "The moment they begin to preach, or even to read the scripture, they become formal, dead, and unreal. Oh, tell them to be natural." A sermon is not an exhibition in *ore rotundo;* it is a glorified conversation, in which a man expresses himself as in familiar speech, but to a larger company. The most

perfect models of naturalness in style are the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Authorised Version of the English Bible, especially the recorded sayings of Jesus Christ. It has been well said that it was the greatness, not the poverty of His spirit, which kept Christ from striving and crying. In the simplest sentences that He uttered He somehow revealed Himself, and communicated not only His doctrine but His spirit. If we can achieve something of this simplicity and naturalness, we shall have done much to remove the sense of unreality which has been so widely felt. The war has brought the general spirit of man back to simplicity and naturalness, as we have seen. No preaching can now be regarded as appropriate which does not manifest these qualities.

It is easy to say these things, and I think they will be generally accepted as true; but it is very difficult to achieve naturalness, or to maintain it in preaching. Even the effort after it may itself become an affectation, and more is required of us than any such conscious and apparent effort. Walter Pater has shown us the way here. "With Flaubert, the search, the unwearied research, was not for the smooth or winsome or forcible word as such, . . . but quite simply and honestly, for the word's adjustment to its meaning."[1] This is of the deepest interest, from the point of view of ethics as well as of rhetoric. Long ago Longinus declared that literary merit is dependent on deep moral causes. The task which Pater and Flaubert impose upon the preacher or writer, that of examining his thoughts until he understands exactly what it is that he desires to express, and then searching for the exact words in which to express it, is one of the highest moral exercises imaginable, for it is indeed simply the search for truth in the inward parts. Mr. Hichens describes one of his characters as "a man who had an instinctive hatred of heroics. His taste revolted from them

[1] *Appreciations,* Style.

as it revolted from violence in literature. They seemed to him a coarseness, a crudity of the soul, and almost inevitably linked with secret falseness."[1] Heroics are not truth. Neither is the detonating word, however astonishing and arresting. Neither is even the fervid word. Fervour counts for much in preaching; and yet, as the late Principal Rainy used to say, "How very easy it is to be earnest!" Imagination, exaggeration, emotion, fervour—I do not discount these, nor deny their legitimacy, nor under-estimate their value.[2] Yet "it is only the perfect word that avails to carry the message of one generation on into the next." In the use of any of the other kinds of speech one has to exercise self-restraint lest they confuse the issue and call attention to themselves rather than to the message they are there to express. We should use them sparingly and keep them well in hand. Avoid the frequent repetition of a word, especially if the word be unusual; still more of a phrase, especially if the phrase be clever. We spoke of structure in sermon-building. In all kinds of architecture there is the choice of two aims. Either the main aim of the architect is for structural truth or it is for decorative effect. In sermon-building the former aim should be an absolute conscience to the preacher and the latter a crime. Our work is to interpret God and life to men reasonably, and mainly by means of clear thought. If that be forgotten, all else is vain. Pater is right in warning us that our search should not be for the smooth, or winsome, or even for

[1] *The Call of the Blood,* xix.

[2] Herbert Spencer's style warns us against the opposite extreme by starving itself in its horror of floridity. He "utterly undervalues what he regards as superfluous words. Attractiveness of style is part of the instrumentality by which a great writer or speaker accomplishes his ends. If a man would convince, he must not disdain the arts by which people can be induced to listen." (Justin M'Carthy, *A History of Our Own Times,* lxvii.)

the forcible word; but for the word, the one word, that will exactly express our thought in the exact meaning we wish it to bear. Of course a preacher will at times get excited. He may employ eloquence, exaggeration, scorn, sarcasm, poetic fancy, or tearful pleading. But it will be well for him if he keep his self-possession sufficiently to say the thing he has to say. The main concern is to be intelligible. If we must be profound or violent, at least let us be so "with clear terms, not with obscure terms."[1]

Naturalness does not come naturally to any public speaker except a very few. Many speakers think they have it as a gift from nature, but we are very apt to deceive ourselves about our natural gifts. Things which we habitually do, of course seem natural to us, but to others they often seem otherwise. There are indeed some considerations of a purely external kind, which are well worthy of the preacher's attention. These do not reach the heart of the matter, but, so far as they go, they certainly help the impression of naturalness. There are three points especially to which special attention is required. One of these is the use of quotations. Nothing lends distinction to a sermon more than a thoroughly apt quotation, but the tendency is to quote too much, and so to spoil the simplicity of the effort. The quotation must always be for the sake of the preaching, and not the preaching for the sake of the quotation. And even thoroughly relevant quotations must not be allowed to overload the sermon. It is safe to take it as a universal rule that most quotations interest the speaker more than they do his audience, and that the mere fact that a quotation con-

[1] The late Principal Rainy was a master in this art. It was a noticeable feature both of his speaking and of his writing, that no matter how abstruse his subject might be, or how involved and even obscure his sentences, he concluded them with a series of short Saxon simple words that rang out upon the ear like blows of a hammer upon an anvil.

firms or illustrates what he is trying to say does not prove that it will be found either necessary or helpful to his discourse. The function of quotations is to call in a higher or recognised authority for confirmation of one's statement, or to repeat and enrich that statement by another man's expression of it in choice or striking language. These criteria should be unsparingly applied in doubtful cases.

Another point is the use of illustration and anecdote. I need not remind you of the immense value of this, in sustaining interest, breaking the strain of continuous pursuit of a theme without losing the thread of the discourse, and driving home the point illustrated. But the story needs to be well told, and every preacher should give earnest attention and deliberate study to the art of telling a story. It is a thing which everybody supposes himself to be able to do, and which surprisingly few can really do well. On the other hand, the effect of illustration will depend to a considerable extent upon the sparing use of it. When a sermon degenerates into a string of anecdotes it is lost. As in the case of quotation, so here, no anecdote should ever be told for the sake of the anecdote, but only because it forwards the object of the sermon. It must never come upon the congregation as a matter dragged in or alien. Only when it is felt to be inevitable is it quite legitimate. It is necessary to cultivate fastidiousness in this respect, and to err rather on the side of rejection than acceptance of doubtful illustrations.

The third point calls for a still more strict fastidiousness. Humour is admissible in preaching, and it may be one of the finest and most penetrating swords of the Spirit. It has been said of battles that a general may be sure of victory if he uses an unexpected weapon; and, for the preacher, humour is often such a weapon. Yet an awful doom awaits that preacher who allows his sense of humour to master him, and to leave itself upon the

memory of the congregation as the main impression of his work. Smartness of any kind is out of place in preaching.[1] Smartness is trick-preaching, and brings the level down from that of the chariot racer to that of the circus horse. All stagey cleverness, all intentional accidents and deliberately prepared impromptus, are to be condemned. Our work will at its best convince us sadly enough that St. Paul was right when he spoke of the foolishness of preaching; there is little need to make it more foolish than it is.

In these matters the labour to attain naturalness need not be very great. But the central effort after the exact understanding of the thought we wish to express, and the search for the exact word that will express it, is a laborious one indeed. M. Anatole France, who has perhaps as good a right to pronounce on style as any living man, has told us in *The Garden of Epicurus* that "A simple style is like white light. It is complex, but does not seem so. . . . In language true simplicity, the simplicity that is good and desirable, is only apparent; and it results solely from the fine co-ordination and sovereign economy of the several parts of the whole."[2]

[1] Smartness in advertised titles of sermons is an abomination against which I would fain warn you. It is cheap to begin with, and brands a man as a vender of cheap wares. And, besides that, there are but few preachers so unfortunate as to be able to keep it up. You begin with advertising as your subject "The Prodigal from the point of view of the Fatted Calf," or "The submarine experiences of Jonah": you end with advertising "A good man," or "A noble race." As if any self-respecting man would cross the street to hear you on the latter subjects, or would not flee into another city rather than hear you on the former.

[2] There is a very wonderful book, known to many of us, and which ought to have a place beside Cruden's *Concordance* on every preacher's desk, which will be of priceless value in finding the "exact word." I refer to Roget's *Thesaurus*. Its arrangement of all possible subjects is a masterpiece of psychology, and is itself a liberal education. Its wealth of synonyms and cognate or related words is practically exhaustive.

The late Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) has said that much attention has been bestowed upon the Genesis of a sermon, but far too little on its Exodus. On the problems of delivery we cannot enter, but a few words are necessary in so far as this also helps to determine the naturalness, and to give the impression of reality, in preaching. Everybody knows that much excellent matter, expressed in perfectly satisfactory style, is wasted for want of right delivery. You may compose a very natural discourse, and then render it unnatural by the way in which you preach it.

There are three standard ways of delivering sermons, viz. reading, preaching from notes more or less full, committing the sermon to heart and repeating it from memory. From every point of view the last method is to be condemned. It involves an enormous waste of time, it burdens the memory injuriously, and it is difficult to believe that it can in any case fail to destroy the naturalness, and so the reality, of the spoken word. Reading, even *verbatim* reading, is a legitimate method, and has been used with splendid effect by many of the greatest preachers. It must be remembered, however, that in order to make it powerful as preaching, the reading of a discourse will always require severe effort and attention. Notes, whether taken into the pulpit or left at home, seem to offer the fullest opportunity for self-expression to the preacher. He brings only his structure of thought, and finds his language in the hearts and eyes of his congregation. His sermon will doubtless be a rougher-edged and less literary production than that of him who writes it out at leisure beforehand, but there may be a positive advantage in that. Our aim is not literary polish or completeness, but direct hits upon men's conscience, intellect, and heart; and the rougher edge may give the deeper wound. At the beginning of a ministry it is in every case wise to write out at least one sermon per week. Later on, when

further advanced in the art of preaching, notes may be substituted in part or altogether.

As to the detailed points in elocution, these must be left to the specialised teaching of the elocution class. It is a study which every wise student will take with the utmost seriousness. Use all its training, and conceal your use of it all; for every mark of the chisel is a flaw upon the structure. But whatever else you learn from your teachers as to the delivery of sermons, let that also be natural and simple, free from mannerisms and from portentousness. Take the sermon as essentially a conversation with your hearers, and converse with them, instead of either bellowing at them or wailing to them. Above all, be good-natured in manner and in tone. There is a "curate *contra mundum*" way of preaching which gives the impression of a young man standing up alone on behalf of eternal truth, and at the risk of his life defying every member of the congregation to his or her face, even when he is uttering sentiments which it is inconceivable that any sensible person would dispute. It is wiser and more effective to hold your welcome for granted, to take your congregation into your confidence, and speak to them as to people with whom you are on friendly terms.

This lecture has been largely occupied with external matters of technique. But apart from these there are internal requirements for the expert. All art is essentially self-expression, the outgoing of a man's own personality upon others. Of no art is this so true as of the art of preaching. The deepest secret of its power, humanly speaking, is the letting loose of the preacher's personality upon his hearers. To be an expert, therefore, one must know how to release one's personality. This is partly included in what has been said concerning naturalness. It involves the breaking down of the barriers of shyness and reserve; the power of understanding and

sympathising with men, and of making them feel that you do so; the will and the power of giving oneself away. But it involves something more than this. If the preacher is to employ his personality in this way, he must make sure that his personality is such as to have a good effect upon those on whom it comes forth. It has been said that the birthmark of frivolity is upon those who are converted by a certain class of sensational preachers. Be that as it may, it is certain that every preacher does leave some sort of birthmark upon his converts. They bear the impress of his personality alike in their moral character and their spiritual life, whether it be of hardness or of sentimentality, of robust austerity or of generous and broad humanity.

If this be so, it is evident that there must be included among the preparations demanded of the expert preacher, a searching and strenuous dealing with his own soul. In the particular matters of moral character and spiritual consecration we shall consider this in a later lecture. Meanwhile, in general, let us remember that he whose main instrument is to be his own personality must be an expert in personality. In so far as his preaching aims at testimony and education, he must qualify himself for it by severe honesty of intellect, which refuses to testify or to teach what he himself does not thoroughly know. The lazy student who has not braced himself to such self-denying study as is necessary to pass his examinations, will need to change his habits before he can attain to any valid authority in testifying or in educating. In so far as his preaching is of the nature of appeal, he must school himself out of all spiritual idleness and self-indulgence, lest he should be found a hypocrite in demanding from his congregation a higher level of spiritual life than he is prepared himself to live upon. I am not demanding of all preachers that they shall be either intellectual or spiritual geniuses, but only that they shall be honest preachers be-

cause they are honest men. Here is the claim of reality in preaching at its very central point, reality in the personality which they send out upon those who hear them. And a further discipline is involved in this connection. Two things are admirable—a genius soaring high in flights beyond the wing of all but a few preachers, and a plain man doing ordinary work well and discovering the particular kind of ordinary work which he is best fitted to perform. The one intolerable thing is a plain man mistaking vanity and ambition for genius, and attempting flights beyond his reach. So, for the expert in personality, a certain ἄσκησις is indispensable, a personal self-discipline, which will reveal to him his powers and his limitations, his individual task and message, and will prepare him for all demands which his ministry may make upon him.

## *LECTURE VI*

### *The Preacher as Statesman*

THE views which were advanced in a previous lecture upon the necessity of founding our preaching upon experience, may naturally seem to indicate that the preacher is concerned with personal rather than with public questions. It is not denied that a ministry which moves along purely individualistic lines may be a fruitful and a powerful ministry. The classical instance is that of Archbishop Leighton. "When minister of Newbattle, he was publicly reprimanded at a meeting of Synod for not 'preaching up the times,' and on asking who did so, and being answered, 'All the brethren,' he rejoined, 'Then if all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Christ and eternity.' "[1] Such preaching may not only save individual souls, but may even do public service. The strongest social power is personal influence, and the general movement of the world has been advanced by ministries and movements which confined themselves to dealing with individual consciences. The Kingdom of God, whose coming is without observation, begins within the souls of Christian men and women, and extends itself outward from them upon society. There are some preachers who simply cannot do the public work of ordinary times effectively; and, as Dr. Dykes says, "there is room and need enough for ministers of both sorts."[2]

[1] Butler, *The Life and Letters of Robert Leighton*, ch. viii.

[2] Dykes, *The Christian Minister and his Duties*, in which the chapter upon Citizenship gives an admirable discussion of this whole question.

Yet there are many men who, though they may prefer the individualistic appeal, and can only by a great effort bring themselves to attack the social and national problems of their time, yet can do this effectively if they make the effort, and these will undoubtedly be the best helpers of their age. Leighton's trenchant reply is perhaps hardly quite fair, and the Synod may have had something to say for itself. It had the memory of John Knox behind it, and it may have felt a not unnatural sense of loss in being deprived of the help of so powerful a spirit as Leighton's, while facing the acute and embittered problems of its time. Yet many of those questions were petty, and it is only issues which are big enough—really great and of permanent importance—that demand the larger prophetic message which carries men beyond the concerns of their own and their hearers' individual souls into a wider world.

The group consciousness is necessarily different from the individual consciousness, and has different moral and spiritual values, which are specially applicable to social life. Nay further, the individual can possess but a maimed and incomplete life if he lives only unto himself. There is the psychology of the individual and there is the psychology of the crowd. But the crowd is made up of individuals, and not one of them can justly escape from his place in the crowd and his obligations to its larger life. The greater part of the individual's life—its perplexities, its duties, and its sins—arises in connection with his relations to others, and so to society. Each of these relations extends his true personality, whose complete definition includes the place he occupies in each of the widening circles in which he necessarily lives. "Two men, a woman and a loaf"—that is a true epitome of the social problem. To preach to the men without any reference to the woman or the loaf must surely be defective

preaching. You cannot preach to the individual rightly unless you include his relations with society. If this be so, it is not enough to concentrate your preaching wholly upon the individual, and to hope that through him you will ultimately form and guide a public conscience. Social preaching also is demanded, bearing directly upon social, national, and international themes.

One has only to glance back at the great preachers of the past to realise how true this is. The prophets of the Old Testament are shining examples. If we were to cut out from their writings all the wider outlook, we should lose many more passages of Holy Writ than any higher critic has ever excised. Jesus Christ Himself founded by His preaching the Kingdom of God. Augustine, Savonarola, Knox—to take but three names out of hundreds—have matched themselves against the crying public questions of their times. How could John Knox be detached from the development of political ideals and the history of Scotland? He "made Scotland over again in his own image." The pulpit has, upon occasions, shown itself capable of making or preventing wars, of righting social wrongs, and of establishing good government in many lands.

Yet there have always been those who would exclude the Church from all intermeddling with statesmanship and secular affairs. Melancthon, in his commentary on 2 Timothy ii. 4, says, "So he wishes the minister of the gospel to serve in his own vocation unreservedly, and not to engage in outside affairs, in political management. Let not the minister of the gospel have one foot in the temple and the other in the *curia*." To few readers will this appear a convincing exegesis of the text, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." Yet many will justly remind us of the dangers which beset preaching when it ceases to be individualistic and begins to deal in public affairs. Whatever a man's own

political views may be, he is not called to be the minister either of the Republicans or the Democrats, either of the Conservatives or the Liberals in his congregation, as an agent in party propaganda. The unfairness of any such course is manifest in an assembly where there is no right of reply. The questions which divide the members of any congregation into different political parties are open questions, on which it is admitted that men of the highest principle and integrity may support either of the rival sides. And, as a matter of fact, it will be found that most men claim the right to do their political thinking and voting for themselves, and to choose for their leaders in these departments others than their religious guides.

A second danger lies in the deadening influence of politics upon preaching, which draws its vitality from its intimate contact with the living personalities of individual men and women. It has been said with much insight concerning European politics that "its appreciation, and much more its direction, depend upon a certain high and cold imagination." Pater, writing of Coleridge, asserts that "Good political poetry—political poetry that shall be permanently moving—can, perhaps, only be written on motives which, for those they concern, have ceased to be open questions, and are really beyond argument."[1] No doubt when Melancthon wrote his commentary quoted above, he had in mind the Church of Rome, and the lamentably deadening and secularising effect of its secular pretensions upon Christianity. It is a danger which threatens all State churches, and which is equally apparent in those churches which devote too much of their own energies to the attempt to end the State connection of other churches. The theology of Ritschl has suffered much in living appeal from its doctrine, both in regard to Justification and the Kingdom of Heaven, that these refer primarily to nations rather than to individuals.

[1] *Appreciations*: Coleridge.

Germany herself owes most of the worst features which the war has brought to light, to her habit of thinking in terms of nations rather than of individuals, and subordinating the interests and even the conscience of the individual to the supreme ends of the State. It has often been brought as an accusation against the Church that she was not able to interfere effectively, and to forbid and prevent the Great War from taking place. But to this the apt rejoinder has been made, that, if the Church had power enough to dictate terms of justice and to enforce them upon the nations, such power would in other directions prove an evil which more than counterbalanced any good that she might accomplish in a specific case such as the late war. It must be confessed that the history of the Church in the centuries that succeed the reign of Constantine gives justification to this opinion. And yet, in such a time as the present, the Church is bound to take risks—even the gravest risks. The sheer necessity for the Christianising of modern public life is so great and pressing, that it were worth the loss of some individualistic fervour, even if it were admitted that such loss is inevitable. At such an hour the words of Christ are applicable to the Church as much as to the individual, "He that will save his life shall lose it."

By far the greatest danger in this whole department is that of inexpert preaching upon highly specialised and complex questions. Of Montaigne it was said that he "loved listening to folks, however humble, *who knew their subject*"; and, in dealing with public questions, the first necessity is to know one's subject. Here there is no room for safe and pious platitudes; if we speak at all we must say something. It is a part of the preacher's work which he must do well or leave alone. He who preaches authoritatively about burning questions, with inaccurate knowledge of the facts, or of the bearing of the facts, is taking the surest way to discredit not only his own ministry, but

the influence of the pulpit as a whole. In this respect preaching on public questions of political or social significance is widely different from individualistic religious appeal. The object of the latter is to rouse a man's conscience, imagination, and emotions so as to lead him towards definite acts of faith and changes of character. For this, many methods are admissible which are illegitimate in handling social questions. Exaggerated or high-flown language may help in the one case, while it may mislead in the other. The style of address which is fitting and valuable in a popular evangelist will, if cultivated in politics or economics, produce a mere demagogue. A realistic illustration—and realists are seldom faithful to the whole facts of the case—may be a powerful and entirely legitimate means of persuasion in the one case, while in the other it may be a gross perversion of the truth.

Many instances might be quoted to show the danger of inexpert pronouncements on public questions. Dante's denouncement of usury was not to be wondered at in the financial conditions of the Florence of his day, but he who would maintain Dante's views as a condemnation of all interest paid on loans in modern commerce would accomplish nothing but to show how far he is from the regions in which he is a safe guide. Even the wise John Bunyan sometimes strays beyond the limits of his general sagacity when he is off his ground. It is not uncommon to hear complaints from Christian men of the trial it is to them to have to listen to crude and one-sided presentations of such problems as capital and labour, strikes, wages, etc. They may have spent a lifetime in seeking after economic justice, while the preacher may have taken his information from a newspaper paragraph or from the conversation of an acquaintance who had a personal grievance. Even if the minister has at one time been for a year a bank clerk, his training will hardly

qualify him to preach as an authority on questions of high finance.

Altogether, this is a very serious and a very difficult problem. No one who has any knowledge of the innumerable duties and details of the ministerial life—its study, its infinite variety of pastoral calls upon his time and thought, its very large correspondence, its demand for service beyond his congregation—will fail to see that the average minister cannot possibly be an expert in social and political science, or keep abreast of its literature and new developments. Yet an expert he must be if he is to form public opinion, or to hold his own with those who are devoting their whole time to the study of such questions. The solution will probably be, that a certain proportion of the ministers in every Church will be found to have a natural aptitude for such studies, and those of them whose knowledge approves itself as sound will be welcomed as experts and specialists, and granted immunity from some other parts of their work in consideration of the value of their contributions to this. For the rest, it is of first necessity that a preacher shall keep strictly within the limits of his accurate knowledge. Although he will never attempt to take the position of an authority upon the whole detail of the problems of public life, yet he may attain a clear conception of the principles of ethics and religion in their application to the main controversies of his day. To this extent he may be accepted as a trustworthy guide, and may render public service of an important order.

These are the dangers, and they are formidable. Yet they are not warnings against preaching upon public topics, but only against doing it badly and blunderingly. They will certainly increase the strenuousness of the preacher's life and labour, but that is no reason why he should not face them. Dangers are a challenge to the brave, a deterrent only to the cowardly and the lazy.

And in a time like this it *is* cowardly to refuse to deal with facts and questions upon which the entire intelligent population is exercising its thought. The Church is a public institution, and as such she has no alternative but to stand for certain principles, and against certain other principles, in public life. Principal Garvie, discussing the present intellectual situation, writes: "A new demand is thus made upon religion. Can it not only assure a man of his individual salvation, but also secure for mankind its social regeneration? The answer that the Christian Churches seem inclined to give, that it is only by individual salvation that social regeneration can be reached, is received by very many with evident impatience. Are there no Christian ideas which can be used as organising principles, are there no Christian motives that may be applied as formative forces in bringing about the social changes that are so urgently needed? The question is being pressed upon Christian theology; and if it is not satisfactorily answered, the social enthusiasm of the age, which might thus be brought into alliance with Christian devotion, may in its disappointment and disgust separate itself from and oppose itself to religion."[1]

There is a mistaken notion that Jesus was purely individualist in His outlook and teaching. This misapprehension arises largely from the fact that on one occasion He refused to give decision in a dispute between two brothers regarding the division of their inheritance. That is one of the texts which must be very tired, and it would be merciful to give it a rest. Because Jesus declined to save a man the expense of consulting a lawyer, it does not follow that He looked on dispassionately while Pharisees were devouring widows' houses. As a matter of fact, Jesus *has* divided thousands of inheritances, which but for Him would fraudulently have gone past the rightful heirs. And the Church of Jesus is bound to take cog-

[1] *The Ritschlian Theology*, i. 5.

nisance of such things. By her influence on men, and still more perhaps on women, she is constantly creating and moulding public opinion for or against the policies canvassed at the time. Benjamin Kidd[1] and Owen Wister[2] have both pointed out that the sentiment of a great nation can be completely changed within a generation. The most potent instrument of such change is undoubtedly *Zeit-geist*—that subtle fashion of thinking which becomes the mental and spiritual atmosphere which no human being can avoid breathing. In the case of Germany the new and disastrous *Zeit-geist* was deliberately cultivated by State-arranged education. But besides the education given in the schools, there are other influences which help to determine the direction in which the *Zeit-geist* shall move; and the pulpit still remains one of the most powerful of these. Let the preacher, then, fearlessly accept the position of a propagandist of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let him deal not in personalities but in principles. Let him preach not as a partisan but as a Christian statesman. Even if he blunder now and then, it is better to take the risk. It is safer in the end to blunder occasionally in the attempt to fulfil the high responsibilities of his office, than to make his ministry one chronic blunder by refusing to face these responsibilities.

These things were always true, but, in the fierce light which the war has thrown upon all such questions, their truth was tragically intensified and charged with vastly heavier responsibility. In the time of such a war as this, the opportunities became infinitely more rich and potent, and the refusal of them more fraught with doom, than they had ever been before. For this, as I have already reminded you, was not a war between nations, but be-

[1] *The Science of Power.*
[2] *The Pentecost of Calamity.*

tween the eternal foundation principles of right and wrong. When these were at death-grips, the whole world's eyes were on the Church and its representatives, from the Pope upon his throne to the humblest village preacher in his pulpit. How could the Church dare to be dumb when all that she professed to stand for hung in the balance of victory or defeat? Never before did the necessity for preaching upon public themes become so manifest. It is said that some preachers ignored the war altogether, praying neither for victory nor for guidance, and preserving a like neutrality in their sermons, while other men were shedding their blood to make those very sermons possible. Has their caution paid them in the end? Ask any mother in their congregations whose son has fallen in battle. Ask any soldier who returns to his home, to receive his religious inspiration from so dispassionate a guide. Nay, examine the man's own soul, and the marks of the "great refusal" will answer you. It is mockery to seek to reap the harvests of Canaan on the fields of Laodicea.

But it is not enough to study the facts of the world's life in any cross-section of her history, to take sides on present moral issues, and to express only this in one's preaching. That, after all, is dealing with results, and preaching can never be effective until it has got back behind results to causes. Many of those causes are evident enough. The war was an event deliberately planned, and prepared for with consummate skill. It would be mere waste of time to adduce facts in proof of this. All the world knows it to be true. The German people stands in the judgment of Christendom as a great and noble nation enslaved by the wicked policy of her rulers; miseducated, especially since the formation of the Pan-German League, into an amazing ignorance and travesty of the facts about other nations; pledged to one flattering national ideal until she had become drunken with wild

arrogance. With models such as Frederick the Great; philosophic guides such as Nietzsche; exponents of history like Treitschke, interpreting the philosophy of the superman into its practical form as Prussianism; politicians in the Reichstag and generals in the field, prepared to apply these principles to the existing situation with an unheard-of thoroughness and a cynical frankness unparalleled in the history of civilised warfare—with such masters and guides as these, and with their openly avowed policy of frightfulness and treaty-breaking, Germany has warned all future generations against principles which she has exhibited for ever as essentially dangerous and bad. Here, surely, there is a field which no living preacher can refuse to enter and explore. Further, there is the fact that all the disastrous ruin which Germany has brought upon herself is the result of the exaggeration of certain virtues, and the loss of balance and proportion in her dealing with them. Efficiency and patriotism are noble virtues, calling out abundance of other virtues in their service, such as thoroughness, hardihood, self-restraint, and self-denial. Never since Aristotle has the world had so sharp a lesson in the doctrine of the golden mean. It has discovered that all the vices put together are not so dangerous a menace to society as a few excellent virtues run wild. What preacher can afford to ignore so important a discovery?

But behind all these German causes of the war there were others, which belonged equally to all the European nations. The former methods of diplomacy—its fostering of quarrels, its chicanery and lying, its unblushing practice of secret treaty-making which nullified the whole effect of its published agreements and hoodwinked the world—all that, adopted and practised by every nation which would play the game of international politics, was the ultimate cause of this as of every other modern war. When such causes as these were on their trial, and the

world was anxiously watching the birth-throes of some cleaner, safer, and more stable politic, it is simply incredible that the Church could have been justified in standing aside and refusing to play her part in the day of regeneration.

Apart from these particular applications, let me impress upon you the general principle. It is required of preaching that it should direct attention to causes rather than merely to effects, in social and public life. All along the line, in her individualist way, the Church has lost much by ignoring this principle. She has been the friend and benefactress of the poor, she has reclaimed drunkards and prostitutes, has given second chances to the victims of society, and has offered a shelter to the disinherited. That pity for the unfortunate individual has produced a noble record of self-sacrificing devotion and redeeming service. But if she had with equal fervour attacked and grappled with the *causes* of poverty, drunkenness, vice, and misery of all kinds, how much more splendid would her record have been, and how much more habitable a place would have been the world.

Yet the most important thing for us in the immediate present is not the study of the causes of the war but the study of its effects. We are only now beginning to realise the scale of these effects, and how they must operate in literally making all things new. Along every line of human life and interests, the watchwords of yesterday are already out of date. The question has often been asked, When the boys come home, what shall we say to them? The problem is really a much bigger one. It is, When the world comes home, how shall we preach to it? We must speak to it in its own language. It has had enough of talismans and magic symbols, enough of platitudes, enough of abstract creeds. To-day we feel the rush of the Spirit on all that goes to make up the life of man. It comes on poetry and all literature, on painting

and all art. It comes on society and social conditions, on labour and economics—very specially on these, for it is labouring men who have saved the cause of freedom for all lands; on international relations also it comes, and demands new bonds of world-wide brotherhood. In these and all other regions of our public life, the note of the Spirit is experience and intelligibility. We must speak to each of them in its own tongue. Each has its own visions, its own ideals, its own claim of justice and of right. To each, these are things holy and imperative: they are the tongues of fire. The old world to which we were accustomed has been blown to atoms. We cannot return to it, for it is not anywhere to return to. It has vanished in "blood and fire and vapour of smoke," as the prophet Joel proclaimed that it would. And the visions and dreams of young men and old alike, which he also prophesied, these also are among us. In general, everyone must admit that we are facing great opportunities not only of individual religion, but also of national revival. But what these actually are, and how they are to be established on earth, is not so clear.

One thing, however, is abundantly clear. It is that none of these things will come of itself. They must be brought, and we must bring them. No resurrection comes automatically. Resurrection is a work of will and power. In one sense the will and power are God's, who brought again Christ from the dead, the firstfruits of all who rise. Yet it was Christ who said of His resurrection, "I have power to lay down My life and I have power to take it again." In our day the son of man has shown in very wonderful fashion that he has power to lay down his life. The time has now come when he must show that he has power to take it again. In this hour we are by his side for this very purpose, that we may help him after his Calvary to find his Resurrection. The war of itself will not do this. For the most part experience

has proved that war can only intensify the already existing character of men and nations. It demands high intelligence and strenuous exertion to bring in the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In other words, by God's grace we are conquerors, but we must be more than conquerors—it is beginning now to dawn upon us how much more than conquerors we must be. Had mere victory been our ultimate aim, we would probably have been Prussianised in a blind fury of revenge; and so, conquering Prussia in the body, we would have been conquered by her in the spirit. It is through love alone that we can make our victory either worthy or enduring, for love is the one condition upon which we can rightly meet the vast opportunity that is set before us. In this spirit we have to face the reconstruction of the fundamental principles of man's public life. The war has for the time being swept away all artificialities, and brought us down to the bedrock of reality and simpleness. It has induced a general willingness to face facts and to revise policies, even such as were accredited by ancient custom. It has for the moment put an end to self-indulgence, and forced upon our attention larger conceptions of life and more generous ideals than have ever entered into the region of practical politics before.

This does not mean that we can fulfil our responsibility by any simple and easy process, such as the literal application of the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount to all the relations and problems of social or international life. To do this is to misunderstand Christ's teaching at the outset, and to run ourselves into a hopeless moral cul-de-sac at many points. It will not avail us to declare that we are going to apply the principles of private morality to all public questions, as if that were the simple remedy for all our difficulties. In private life we may exalt our ideals as high as we choose, and set ourselves to realise

them as the one grand quest of life. But in public life, when we are about to enter the domain of new legislation, the case is not so simple. Within her own boundaries the Church must be the pioneer of ideals higher than those of the average man, but she cannot insist on the immediate embodiment of these ideals in the statute book. Laws cannot justly be made for nations upon the level of the ideals of the highest spirits in the nation. Legislation must be the expression of the average conscience of the people legislated for, and any legislation which goes beyond that, or at least far beyond it, is courting all manner of evasions, breaches, and betrayals. This must be kept in mind, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

This is but one example of the complexity of the problems we are facing, and of the need for carefulness and intelligence in dealing with them. The first necessity is for thought and understanding. The war has forced that necessity upon us all. We have never yet framed to ourselves an adequate philosophy of history. To deny that there is such a thing, would be but a new variant of the saying of the ancient fool, who said in his heart, "There is no God." We have not indeed denied the ultimate rationality of history, but we have proclaimed it to be beyond our understanding, and left it for God to understand. By doing so we have hindered God in His age-long work in the life of man upon the earth. The war has forced us to think these things out for ourselves. The whole meaning of man's labour under the sun is that he is called upon to be a "labourer together with God." God, the Creator, never finishes any part of His creation. He fashions it in the rough, and passes over the half-finished thing for man to complete. That has been so from the beginning, when men found the crude world, and smote it into comfort and beauty for their uses, hewing its stone and shaping its timber and smelting its iron. From that

first hour until now there never has been so loud a call to man to enter into the fellowship of creation with the Maker. Here is the world in ruins, with latent possibilities in it of the new earth wherein righteousness may dwell. In fellowship with God we must rebuild the world —not this time upon its former foundations of ambition and exploitation by the strongest, but upon the granite rocks of morality, mutual service, and love. The immense energies and vitalities of national and international life are in a new way set free to-day; it is ours to observe them, to combine them, and to direct them.

When we attempt a more particular consideration of what all this means, we are immediately confronted with the preliminary task of dealing in wise and Christian fashion with our vanquished enemies, and this is manifestly a matter on which the Church is called upon for a clear and effective lead. It has been our painful duty during those past years to insist upon the righteousness of our cause and the inexcusable wickedness of the policy and methods of the enemy. In doing this we have had to face the censure of some good people who seemed incapable of admitting the fact of wickedness even when it was threatening their lives, or of realising its awful danger. Having conquered, we had still to beware of hidden treachery and new dangers lurking beneath the professed submission. But the moment it became safe and possible to do so, it was clearly the duty of Christian victors to do everything in their power for those whose misguided conduct had brought them low. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat." It was our Christian duty to press for the removal of the food blockade on the earliest possible opportunity. Further, it is our Christian task to restore, so far as may be, the crushed and humiliated manhood of the German people. This does not imply that those who planned and executed atrocities should go unpunished. But it does demand that

we shall be willing to accept the excuses of those who confess themselves misled, and to do everything in our power to encourage and strengthen them in their acceptance of nobler ideals and their attempt to rebuild their national life on worthier principles. This is indeed the only sound policy, in view of the danger of driving them into desperate courses which would inevitably lead to permanent embitterment and future wars. But our first business is not with policy but with principle, and there is no doubt as to the teaching of Christianity in such a case.

Having settled this preliminary matter, we immediately come to one of vastly greater responsibility. We find ourselves facing for the first time in history the living and practicable possibility of a final end of war. This is, indeed, by no means the first time that men have said such things. In England, just after the first great Exhibition, there was a widespread conviction that the problem had been solved, and that great wars were over for ever. That was in 1853, and in 1854 the Crimean War broke out. In the days of the Hague Conference there were some who cherished the dream of everlasting peace: in 1914 the Great War broke out. The number of those who died in the Crimean War was about 24,000, of whom only about 4000 fell in battle or died of wounds.[1] In the Great War my country lost well-nigh a million dead. There are many whose faith in the possibility of ever bringing war to an end is shaken by such facts as these, and who fall back upon the humiliating theory that man is essentially a fighting animal, which will fight on till the end of time. But the past four years have both wearied and terrified the world in regard to war. Great statesmen of various lands found themselves confronted with the task of devising means whereby the failures of the past efforts after permanent peace might be turned

[1] Justin M'Carthy, *History of Our Own Times,* ch. xxviii.

into success at last. The ideal of a League of Nations is the result. Opinion is divided upon the sufficiency of the Articles published by the Peace Conference in Paris, but the general idea of a unified world and an inclusive bond between the nations, is adopted by the majority of leading statesmen in every land. In what I have to say upon this subject I wish to avoid all controversial points as far as that is possible, and to speak rather of the general idea of a League of Nations than of the particular form in which the present articles have expressed that idea. This lecture labours under the serious disadvantage of having had to be written and printed some months ago, in ignorance of the changes which were sure to come in the situation between the time of its preparation and its delivery. But whatever form the great ideal may have found for its expression before the lecture is delivered, it will still remain true that modern preaching must perforce concern itself with the whole subject.

The League of Nations was formed in full consciousness of all that rendered its success improbable, and it introduced two elements into its great experiment which had never been tried on earth before. The first of these is its universal embrace of all civilised nations within its bond. This radically changed the situation from any alliance or system of alliances known before, in which the balance of power was maintained by rival groups of nations. The second is the pooling of all national military and naval forces existing anywhere, for the common purpose of policing the world. This latter factor renders the competitive increase of armaments impossible, and meets with an overwhelming force of arms any attempt to break away from the League on the part of any of its constituent members. In view of these new conditions, and the hope of peace they bring, it is surely the duty of the Church to throw her whole universal strength into the realising, in some form or other, of the mighty dream.

When we think of what the next great war must be like, if war should ever return, we see how true this is. Science, whose proper function is production, and the ameliorating and enriching of the conditions of human life, has for four years been wholly devoted to destruction. Nor has she come to the end of her powers along that line. She is only at the beginning of them, and if she were to proceed in her development of the means of destruction for even a few more years, the next war would be neither more nor less than a suicidal conspiracy for the extirpation of the human race. These words are not rhetoric, they are simply and literally true, and they give no faintest conception of the carnival of devilry which that conspiracy would let loose upon the earth. In all circumstances the Church must stand for the Christian ideal of peace on earth. But the peace for which she stands must be a peace which God and humanity will countersign. Had she demanded a patched-up peace in these past years, a peace which must inevitably have handed on the heritage of war to the coming generation, she would have betrayed the Christian ideal. Now, when, under new conditions, peace seems actually to have come within our grasp, how much blacker would the betrayal be if, on any pretext whatsoever, she did not do her very utmost to strengthen and consolidate the effort after its attainment.

Of the League we shall have something further to say, but meanwhile there is another point which demands attention before we pass on to that. We have repudiated the doctrine that man must always remain a fighting animal, whose brute instincts will keep wars raging on the earth to the end of time. Yet we have tried to show that, out of this immeasurable evil, great elements of good have come, in the quickening of such ideals as self-sacrifice, courage, and endurance. If we are not to lapse back again into that spiritual lethargy which is the chief danger

of times when peace is guaranteed and safety assured, we must find a moral equivalent for war. Peace must discover a spirit of equally vital interest to the spirit which has been called forth on the fields of battle or the threatened seas. The literal translation of Psalm lxxvi. 10 is, "The residue of wrath shalt Thou gird upon Thee." For us this means the utilising for other ends, of the unspent passion generated by the war. How this is to be accomplished, will be one of the paramount problems of the immediate future. It is a problem which as yet has been but little thought of, but which seems to offer a very fertile field for speculation and experiment. The heart of every boy and girl thrills to the contact of mother earth. Their restless energies, their wild idealism, their untamable curiosity seek outlet in some adventure. Fortunately, the earth and the sea are full of natural opportunities for such adventure. Exploration and pioneering are still possible; the reclaiming of waste lands and the afforestation of mountains, the cultivation of the soil and all manner of work in stone and wood and iron, the sailing on the sea and the conquest of the air—all these offer opportunities. Science, linked up with travel, may teach them to explore the resources alike of sea and land. There should also be more of public recognition and reward for courage and service, which would keep these ideals more in evidence. These are but a very small sample of the ways in which the sense of high adventure may draw out the vitality of the human spirit, and bring back romance and chivalry, lost of late in battle, to cast their glamour over peaceful pursuits. The passion to save life is surely as available as the passion to win battles. The touch of mother earth is as sweet and wholesome for the spirit in peace as it is bracing in war. We heard much in former days in praise of universal national training for military and naval service. Might there not be for every boy and girl a period of national service

along some such lines as those we have mentioned, in the interests of peaceful progress? And if this were ever to be instituted, would it not be peculiarly fitting that the Church should play her part in so wholesome an enterprise? How better can we show ourselves to be the salt of the earth than by giving piquancy to its daily bread, and to the labour by which that bread is earned?

But let us return to our main subject. The coming of the new world order will be the most considerable event in history since the coming of Jesus Christ. Internationalism had been talked of before, but its most elementary principles had never been understood. As a science it was in utter confusion, and men were everywhere attempting to solve international problems with national, and even with tribal and family, instruments and ambitions. In a tentative and preparatory way it had been perceived that the highest ideals of national life are such as will bring benefit to other nations and to the world. Your Monroe Doctrine was, for all ordinary situations, the obviously wise and right doctrine for a land so wonderfully capable of supplying its own demands as your land is. Yet there are causes which by their very nature are cosmopolitan. There can never be a Monroe Doctrine in freedom or in righteousness, for the bondage or the crime of any country is a standing menace to every other country. Abraham Lincoln spoke in Philadelphia of "the sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but I hope to the world, for all future time." Woodrow Wilson said in Omaha that "Now it is our great duty to fuse the elements of America together for the purpose of the life of the world." A still wider extension of the same ideal has been manifested in the desire of all good and wise men on both sides of the Atlantic to heal the ancient breaches, and to link up the sentiments and fortunes of America with those of Britain. I need not

remind you how largely the war has fulfilled this desire. Surely it cannot be outwith the range of any preacher's duties to foster our happiest relations. If I mistake not, at the moment when the Venezuelan misunderstanding threatened a serious breach between us, the pulpits of America played no small part in preventing hostilities; and it is inconceivable that any Christian man could regard that as a secular or unsuitable employment for all preachers to engage in. But if that be true of a single incident in international politics, how far more true must it be of the linking up all the nations of the earth in permanent good understanding?

The relation of internationalism to patriotism may present a difficulty to some. It is not necessary to plead for the essential sacredness of patriotism before any audience of American preachers. Your flag is painted on the heavens, and in every sunrise and in every sunset you may see the long bands of crimson and of white; and, over all, the blue sky spangled with the stars of God. Patriotism is not a policy, it is a sacrament. I pity the man who is too spiritual to preach the love of country to his countrymen. Is there not then a danger lest the larger international brotherhood will lessen or obliterate the narrower patriotic sentiment? The reply is that internationalism is not offered as a substitute for patriotism. The strongest supporters of the idea of the League are among the leading patriots of the world. For all those good purposes which patriotism has served, it will remain, at once the most useful and the most passionate sentiment in public life. But by the introduction of the larger ideal you will cleanse patriotism and humanise it. Its danger in the past has been the tendency to become exclusive, selfish, and supercilious. When, in the new consciousness of our oneness with all other lands, it ceases to be so, it will become both nobler and mightier yet.

In all this it will be seen that we have been regarding

the League of Nations idea as an instrument for a far greater result than the end of war. Nothing which aims merely at ending anything has touched the highest levels of endeavour. The spirit which inspires the new ideal is a positive, not a negative spirit. Military and political alliances between nations are good and valuable so far as they go, but the thing that really matters in deciding ultimate destinies is the spirit underlying any such alliances. It is the trust or suspicion, the admiration or aversion, the love or the hatred which the nations cherish toward one another in their hearts. The new world order stands for this positive aim. It would create love and good understanding between all the peoples of the world; it would make goodwill, and not the lust for exploitation, to be the principle of trade and commerce between the countries; it would inculcate willingness for sacrifice on the part of each nation—the sacrifice of cherished privileges and ambitions—for the sake of the general good; it would have each land bring in its own peculiar gifts for the enrichment of all other lands.

But this is none other than the Kingdom of Heaven come to earth at last. The modern world has experimented with all the ideals of paganism—with the ideals of Rome, Greece, and Nineveh. For the larger purposes of modern life all these experiments have failed. Now we are altogether coming back to Christ for one more experiment, on a larger scale than any in the past, in which we shall try at last the ideals of His Kingdom. The question that will be answered is, whether Jesus Christ is or is not a match for the selfish impulses of crude human nature in nations and in men. Neither patriotism nor internationalism is a true end in itself; they are but means towards the ends for which Jesus lived and died. By what imaginable argument can any minister of Christ excuse his refusal to play his part in the decisive battle of His Kingdom?

There is one further point on which we must pause for a moment here. Every preacher of modern times professes to take some interest in foreign missions, and regards them as legitimate subjects for his preaching. It was a very remarkable feature in the war, that we discovered how easy it was to enlist the interest of soldiers by addresses on Foreign Missions. No doubt this was partly due to their own new experience of travel, and their consequent realisation of the width of the world and of the actual existence of foreign nations. But there was more in it than that. Foreign missions used, until recent years, to be regarded by the home Church largely from the point of view of sentiment. A halo of romance and picturesque adventure, a sense of the far distances of the world, and of dimly seen lands whose shores were washed by strange oceans—these were the light by which the home churches once formed their conception of the missionary. In immaculate clericals he sat under his palm-tree, Bible in hand, with his surrounding group of naked savages. Of late a change has come over the spirit of this dream, and the missionary is now regarded as a nation-builder, educationist, legislator, civiliser, and statesman of the Kingdom of God. Statesmanship has taken the place of sentiment as the watchword of the Foreign Mission idea. Nor can the preacher in home lands effectively treat the subject otherwise. He must realise the supreme evil of all godless civilisation, which is the only alternative to missionary enterprise, and which is by many degrees a greater danger to the world's life than the rudest barbarism. Too often the civilisation of the West, as it invaded the paganism of the East, has borne with it no trace of Christian principles whatever. Its gospel has been that of antichrist—greed of gain, lust, drunkenness, and cruelty. These have been by far the most formidable obstacles with which the foreign missionary has had to contend. Now he sees the West pro-

posing to go forth to the East in the exact spirit and intention of the Kingdom of God, bearing in its hands for the poverty of heathenism the rich gifts of protection, freedom, and fair play for all mankind. Its purpose is to achieve on the largest scale many of the same objects for which every foreign mission exists. Its policy must certainly include the recognition of Christian missions as its allies and exponents. This fact alone is enough to demand from all preachers that they be also statesmen.

This lecture has been mainly occupied with those international aspects of statesmanship which have been the direct and immediate outcome of the war. Beyond these, however, there lie the wide fields of Christian ethics and economics as they concern the social conditions of our own lands. There we find the extremest contrasts between the condition of the top and the bottom classes in society, to which contrasts no corresponding differences in merit or in intelligence can be shown to exist. Among the workers you have a continual pressure for higher wages, better houses, and ampler leisure. These demands are in some cases created by the selfishness and tyranny of capitalists and employers. In other cases they are themselves tyrannous and selfish, demanding conditions which would render production impossible. The strikes which broke out during war-time, and those which became epidemic after the war, are ominous signs of the times. In them one hears the distant rumble of what may become a world-wide thunderstorm of revolution against all forms of centralised government. These, on the economic and social side, are accompanied by a not less serious set of conditions on the side of morals. Especially in regard to the relations between the sexes do we find the old order changing, giving place to new. Questions which for generations have been supposed

to be closed for ever, are being reopened without a tremor of conscience or a hesitation of modesty or self-distrust. At the very moment when woman is gaining her final charter of emancipation, the whole theory of marriage and of home life is being challenged. These and countless other matters are being brought out for discussion, on the definitely understood condition that they are to be treated as open questions.

All this ferment has been long in process, but the war has brought it to the boiling-over point. The most significant fact of late, so far as the labour controversy is concerned, is that the League of Nations has taken it over as a proper subject for its treatment, by the machinery of international bureaux. But the whole heave of society is ominous or promising, whichever it may turn out to be. There is a sense of something great and elemental about to come, changing conditions of human life. We have staked our all upon democracy; we have fought for it and won it; we have seen it winning out, hand over hand, against all the remaining strongholds of tyranny. Yet none of us has really understood it, and few have tried to understand. Something has been wrong with us all. We have not been big enough to manage modern life. The cities which we have created, the institutions which we have set up, have turned round upon us like Frankenstein's monster. While on the one hand we have been gaining democracy, on the other hand we have been losing it in various directions. We have been out for the wrong things,—for inadequate and futile things—such as success, politics, peace, comfort, wealth. These things are excellent as means towards the true ends of living; as ends in themselves they are not only disappointing, but supremely dangerous. Democracy has other enemies than emperors: all mistaken and mean conceptions of life are its enemies. It stands for the equality of men. This does not mean equality in natural gifts, in abilities, or

even in rewards. Rewards must ever be refused to those who shirk, and given to those who obey, the imperious calls of duty. Democracy stands for equality of opportunity for all men born, the equal right of each to have an unhandicapped chance of developing the best that is in him. The divisions and class hatreds, that separate the people of a land into hostile camps and exclusive social castes, are the denial of this equality, and they are due to fundamental misunderstandings of the real character of human life. The war, uniting men of all ranks in common enterprise, common danger, and common suffering, has done much for the idea of equality, and its work must now be consolidated into permanent convictions on which we are prepared to act. Democracy also stands for freedom. But we have been free so long that we have forgotten what freedom means. Freedom is a much richer and deeper thing than many of its most enthusiastic advocates understand. As an end in itself, it is of little value; as a means towards the true ends of living it is of priceless worth. It involves the further question, What are we free to be and to do? It is of little gain to any country that its citizens are free to be wretched, discontented, and enemies of society. It is a great thing if they are free to live, to laugh, and to love. Thus, as Lincoln proclaimed fifty-six years ago upon the field of Gettysburg, democracy is once again upon its trial. We have fought for it; now we must define it. We have won the war; now we must win the peace.

I have touched but lightly upon all these momentous things, partly because the social conscience of the Church has been awakening to them of late, and many voices have been proclaiming their message. Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin devoted his Lyman Beecher Lectures entirely to this subject, and gave it one of the most masterly expositions it has yet had. My own task is rather to show the connection of this and many other subjects with the war, and

especially to recall the attention of preachers from dogma to experience. All these social problems are matters of experience. They command men's attention whenever anyone speaks of them, because they are the living interests of the world which the war has awakened. But experience is not a matter of water-tight compartments, as if there were such things as a man's political experience and his religious experience, divided off from one another by impenetrable barriers. Consequently it would appear that no preacher who would really appeal to men's experience can possibly ignore these subjects. The minister who does not read the newspapers in a time like this is qualified for preaching only in a land where no newspapers are published. A preaching which does not include any beyond individual interests, whether temporal or eternal, is surely an anomaly to-day. We are called upon to give to the movements of our time the backing of an informed and intelligent thought on the part of the general mass of mankind, and to direct into Christian channels the immense vitalities which the war has set free.

This is an essentially sacred and Christian task. We live in the days of a victory which has come through sacrifice. The world has been redeemed by precious blood. All its hopes of a better life are founded upon sacrifice; and it has been proved to demonstration that selfishness has no future but ruin and catastrophe. These are the social lessons of the war, and they need to be interpreted in terms of Jesus Christ and of His cross. It is as if He were saying to us all, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom." Late at night, when the decks were silent on a great Atlantic liner, long before the war, I found myself alone with a man famous in the public life of the United States. We fell into serious conversation about the social conditions of our great cities. I asked him what remedy he proposed, and he replied,

"An Emperor." I expressed my astonishment that any citizen of your great Republic should have cherished such a hope. "Yes," he replied, "an Emperor—and His name is Jesus Christ." The Emperor has come, and this is the day of His Empire. Long ago He founded it in sacrifice, bringing peace by the blood of His cross. That peace has been long in coming, and many brave men's lives have been made conformable unto His death that it might come. But Calvary may, as we have already said, be either barren or fruitful, according to the Resurrection which it brings. On His cross He cried, "It is finished," meaning doubtless among other things, those evils of society which had torn asunder and tortured the world. But such things are "an unconscionable time in dying," and many of them are not yet dead. Can any preacher of the Kingdom stand aloof from it in the day of its coming? It is excellent to go down a mean street and preach to the inhabitants of its slums by the light of a lantern on which you have written the inscription, "God is Love." They will take your message seriously when they discover that you are there also to give them homes instead of hovels, beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

## *LECTURE VII*

### *The Preacher as Priest*

OUR two closing studies lead us to the two principal and perpetual offices of the Christian ministry, those of priest and prophet. The two have much in common, and they must be taken together as a whole, neither being complete without the other. Both priest and prophet are in a true sense mediators between God and man, but in different ways. The prophet mediates by means of persuasive or commanding speech, proclaiming God's word to man: the priest mediates by means of ritual and devotion, offering man's soul with all its needs to God. The offices exist because of the two great silences in which we live, and which often become oppressive and painful in their longing to be broken. The silence of God, under whose mystery we suffer and rejoice, work and rest, sin and repent, without one authentic word from the August Majesty above us, either of guidance or praise or blame, is one of the sorest facts of life. It is given to the prophet to break that silence, and speak to the people words which they recognise as authoritative words of the Lord. The silence of the soul is that for which the priest exists. The inner world of doubt and faith, anxiety and confidence, repentance and moral triumph, longing and apathy, is for the most part a silent world. We try to find relief in language for pent-up emotion, but the words will not come. We try to pray, but know not what we should pray for as we ought, and find ourselves "uttering prayers and leaving God to punctuate

them and make sense of them."[1] The priest finds utterance to God for the people, and breaks the silence of their souls in fitting and reverent expression of their desires and thoughts.

Obviously it is the priest who is *par excellence* the mediator between men and God.[2] The prophet's mediation is in the nature of a manifesto, the priest's is a communion. The prophet's task is to reveal God to man by intelligible speech and message; the priest's is, as it were, to reveal man to God, and the medium of this revelation will often be that of emotion set free. Ministers will seldom choose deliberately the one office or the other. It will be largely a matter of temperament and instinctive attraction. One will find himself drawn rather to the prophetic, another to the priestly side of his calling. This will determine the general character and quality of a man's ministry, and it will consequently (in city congregations, where there is a variety of ministries to choose from) select for each his congregation according to the differing temperaments of the hearers. Yet all ministers must fulfil both these offices, and perform many of the functions of each.

The priest as mediator between God and man in no sense stands between the two in the sense of substituting anything which he performs for the direct communion of the soul with God. Any such conception of the priestly

[1] Peyton, *Memorabilia of Jesus,* ch. v.

[2] The Roman Catholic Church has claimed for her priests the mediatorial function in a sense which is the prerogative of Christ alone. She developed the idea that the priesthood was to be regarded as "the link between the Kingdom of God on earth and its divine Head, and as the channel through which the Holy Spirit was communicated to the world." The Protestant faith repudiates this view, teaching on the one hand that Jesus Christ alone is priest, the only mediator between God and man; on the other hand proclaiming the priesthood of all believers. The priest or the prophet can only be regarded as mediator in so far as he assists men in their efforts at communion with God.

office is defective in its sense of the spirituality both of God and man. In the holy mystery of communion, these two must meet and hold direct converse one with the other. The priest can be mediator only in the sense of helping and stimulating that communion, of providing it with a fitting language, or of awakening the desire for it where that has fallen asleep. To do this he must be both humanist and churchman; on the one hand sympathetically aware of human life as a thing which he not only understands but shares, and on the other hand conscious of himself as a minister of divine mysteries. In the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne, he is "not estranged from human life, and yet enveloped in the midst of it with a veil woven of intermingled brightness and gloom."

The most characteristic action of the priest is the administration of the sacraments. In Communion services there should be little preaching, much prayer, and considerable spaces of silence. To this rule the time-honoured Scottish custom of embedding the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the centre of a week of incessant sermons, and the prefacing of it with an unusually long and distinctively theological discourse known as the Action Sermon, is certainly an astonishing phenomenon. It may be explained by the fact that a Scotsman of the old school was a born theologian and lover of sermons. It would be an interesting question, were it capable of receiving an answer, how much of all that immense volume of preaching and exposition actually affected his reception of the elements. Certainly in modern days the taste of the Christian community has turned away from the old custom, and is more helped by devotional than by intellectual exercises at Communion seasons. On these occasions few worshippers desire new truths. They seek rather a selection of those which are most familiar, and a repetition of texts and sentences dedicated to sacramental use.

The word *sacrament* has a peculiarly interesting history. In classical Latin it denoted the oath of fidelity sworn by the Roman soldier on entering the army. When it was taken over by the ecclesiastics of later days, it took on the additional meaning of a mystery, a second spiritual significance, lying behind material symbols and revealed to the worshipper in the act of using these. So we have the *sacramentum stellarum,* and many other such phrases, which tell of the mystery of life in all its parts, and the sacramental way of regarding Nature and probing her mystic secrets through the medium of things revealed by the senses. For us the word retains both meanings. It is the oath of fidelity which the communicant swears to Christ and to His Church, and it is the revelation to his soul of spiritual mysteries, through the material symbols of bread and wine. The priest is the minister of the sacrament, and it is his duty to impress upon each communicant the obligation of honour under which he brings himself by partaking, and at the same time to suggest to him something of those mysteries of faith which may disclose themselves, and to prepare his heart to receive the disclosure in wonder, gratitude, and reverent response.

Next in order comes prayer in the priestly office of the minister. Much has been written upon this subject, and we can only touch upon it here very briefly. The main thing to remember is that public prayer is a function of the priestly office in which the minister offers prayer not for himself but for the people. The custom would not exist but for the fact that the worshipper finds, in the prayers offered by the minister, some sort of spiritual help and satisfaction different from that which he finds in private prayer. The minister, as he leads the devotions of the congregation, must always remember this. He is there for the sake of the worshipper. He cannot be content with praying for what he himself desires, or

for things that interest himself. Dr. Marcus Dods, in a letter written in his early preaching days, laments his "failure to express the prayers of others," and thereby shows his insight into the heart of the situation. Many of the worshippers desire to pray, but find themselves distressed with the silence of their souls. The minister, in his prayers, is there to break that silence. He should so pray that, in the weighty words of Dr. Oswald Dykes, the worshipper should feel that "it is *himself* that he offers—the wealth of his redeemed personality—his own love, his own will, body and soul devoted to do and to bear all the will of the Father in heaven."

Bearing this in mind, we see clearly that this part of the minister's work must require careful preparation. In a few men of quick and sympathetic imagination, the presence of the congregation will inspire suitable thought and language in which to express their manifold need and desire. Yet even the best of these will find that prayers which have not been in any measure thought out beforehand will inevitably omit some petitions that ought to have been included. In all but a very few, prayers wholly unconsidered beforehand will tend to become slovenly; and no brilliance of preaching will atone for the unpardonable affront both to God and to His worshippers of a slovenly prayer. Yet, on the other hand, one must beware of any touch of artificiality in which the preparation of prayers will reveal itself. Prayer, public or private, is essentially a spirit and not an art. When it comes consciously into the region of æsthetics, it is at once marked with the brand of failure. If this be true, as we have argued, in regard to the sermon, it is far more deeply true of the prayers. I have even known a man who found that the thought of his public prayers intruded itself into his private devotions, and led him to select an utterance here and there as suitable for the service he was preparing to conduct on the coming Sun-

day. When professionalism has gone so far as that, it has become a disease that threatens the life of the man's own soul, and for his soul's sake he must be done with it at whatever cost.

Much has been said in favour of a liturgy, which would do away with all the dangers and difficulties which we have mentioned. In the Liturgy of the Church of England we have a form of devotion which has satisfied the needs and directed the prayers of many millions of worshipping men and women, and which has certainly been one of the most priceless gifts of God to His Church. In the churches which do not use that Liturgy, there has been of recent years a growing movement in favour of liturgical worship. Even for Nonconformist churches, the desire seems reasonable, so long as the liturgy is not made compulsory. A man's capacity for fitly leading the devotions of a congregation must largely depend upon the varying moods of his spirit. There are times which come upon us all when we cannot adequately express ourselves in prayer. These are not in our own control, for they vary with physical as well as spiritual health, and depend upon many causes to which we have no access. Yet in most Nonconformist churches the congregations are entirely at the mercy of the minister's moods. It would seem clear that in all our churches the use of a liturgy should be acknowledged as a thing permissible, when the minister feels that it would be more edifying to the people, and more helpful to their devotions, than any impromptu prayers which at the time he is capable of uttering. If any Church is not satisfied with any of the existing liturgies, there is no reason why it should not compose one for the use of its ministers when they feel the need of such assistance. Calvin composed a liturgy for the Church at Geneva, and John Knox composed one for the Church of Scotland.[1] In using such

[1] The latter is a very remarkable service book, in which the

aids to public devotion, we are but fulfilling the injunction of the prophet, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord."[1]

Yet many of us will feel that in the main the words we take should be our own. "The peculiar genius of the Protestant religion—the free and joyous spirit inspired by the doctrine of gratuitous forgiveness"—naturally seeks opportunity for spontaneous expression; and there are times when the preacher would feel his spirit restrained and imprisoned if he were confined either to a printed liturgy or to words which he himself had written out for the occasion. The occasion itself will often suggest thoughts for prayer which no previous study would have given. It will quicken a man's devotional life to new activity and to fresh sympathy as he feels himself going, in the company of his fellow-worshippers, into the presence of his God. Most of us will, I think, feel that we must leave ourselves free to receive and express such inspiration. I would suggest that the ideal for public prayer is neither the *verbatim* preparation which makes the prayer a recital of a fixed form of words, nor the entirely unpremeditated speech which is created by the chance suggestions of the moment. As in the sermon, so in the prayer, structure is required. The total absence of structure in any kind of public utterance makes that utterance less perfect in itself and far less impressive and memorable to those who hear it. Structure is the result of orderliness and rationality in the mind of the speaker, and these qualities are necessary for prayer as well as for preaching. Without them, our prayers tend to double back upon themselves and to repeat petitions and phrases already used; or to become a curious composite mosaic of devout and familiar phrases, Biblical

rugged soul of its author reveals wonderful depths of tenderness. It ought to be familiar to every preacher.

[1] Hosea xiv. 2.

and otherwise—as truly a liturgy as any printed book, but a very inferior liturgy. They tend also to degenerate into sentimental meditations, which may excite or lull the feelings without suggesting any chain of clear and definite ideas. Such prayers are not of a high order of devotion. "What is it then?" says St. Paul. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."[1]

To secure structure in our prayers, it is not necessary (except in a very early stage of one's ministry) to prepare beforehand a single sentence which we shall repeat in them. The less of such preparation we do, the more spontaneous our prayers will be. All that is necessary—but this is indispensable—is to think out some general line along which our thought shall move. By this means we shall come to the exercise with a selected and ordered succession of thoughts, leaving ourselves free to follow that sequence in whatever language, and with whatever proportion allotted to this thought or that, the moment may suggest. Such preparation of line will leave us free even to break away from our intended sequence if we feel moved to do so. But the very act of arranging one's ideas into an ordered sequence will help to give structure to the prayer, by providing us with the memory of a proposed arrangement which stands like an intellectual conscience in the background.

A still more important point is the use of an indirect method of preparation. In regard to style for the sermon, we spoke of the diligent search for the fitting word. That is necessary, but it should have been supplemented by the further suggestion that a man's style may come to him unconsciously, as a kind of echo of the books he reads. If his choice of books is good, he will find himself naturally acquiring an opulent and delicate ear for style, so that the right word or phrase comes naturally,

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

while anything offensive jars at once and is rejected. But if this method should direct our choice of books for the sermon, it should be even more conscientiously used as a preparation for prayer. There is a language which devotion has invented and perfected for itself, as the natural expression of its spirit and mood. Thomas à Kempis, Augustine, Molinos—these, and such as these, and many modern masters in the devotional life—have clothed themeslves each in his own raiment. As they come forth from the ivory palaces of their prayer, there is about their garments the subtle aroma of myrrh and aloes and cassia, of sandal-wood and incense. It is good, as the hour of service draws near, to set aside some time in which to steep oneself in such devotional literature, until one's own atmosphere has been infected with its spiritual breath as with some rare essence. This will indirectly prepare the spirit to express itself in prayer, not only fittingly, but with a certain suggestiveness of fascinating spiritual things. There is nothing like prayer for teaching a man to pray. Yet it sometimes happens that he will find it difficult to transfer the mood of prayer from his private devotions to his public services. Hence, besides much actual private prayer, it is well to induce the mood of prayer by devotional reading undertaken for this express purpose.

We have considered the sacraments and prayers, offices peculiarly characteristic of the priest as such. But it must be remembered that the priestly idea must to a certain extent affect the sermon also. The sermon comes more directly under the category of the prophetic than of the priestly, but it is a mistake to separate the functions too sharply, as if they were mutually exclusive. You are a priest while you are preaching as well as when you pray. A hint of this has been already given in the fact that so many qualities which are required for sermon-building are also necessary for the preparation of public prayer.

It is not, however, chiefly in such externals that the prophet must be also priest, but in the spirit of his mind, and his attitude towards those who listen. In the prophetic office there is much which tends to isolate the preacher from his hearers. It is his duty to attack their sins and to lay bare their unrealities and pettinesses. On fire with his scorching truth, he will be apt to feel that he is being drawn asunder from them. If he discovers in his congregation those who have no appreciation of his thoughts and no interest in his message, he is tempted to a certain haughtiness characteristic of some pulpits. It is as if he drew his garments about him in scorn, and flung his truths at them in a manner which seemed to invite them to turn this over in what they call their minds. "To go preach to the first passer-by," exclaims Montaigne, "to become tutor to the ignorance of the first I meet, is a thing I abhor." Few of us will make much of our ministry if we engage in it in that spirit. A preacher must address his people as a friend first, and only afterwards as a critic. He must believe that his message is welcome, and never begin his work with even a touch of scorn. The common people heard Jesus gladly, and the reason was that His preaching had its home in the hearts of the common people. So must our message come forth to them as something which has its home in their hearts.

All this becomes more evident when we recollect to how large an extent the preacher's message is actually given to him by his hearers. In considering the preacher as prophet, we shall see that his message is a truth or a set of truths which, out of the general mass of his experience and study, has risen up into greater clearness than the rest and shone forth. What is it that determines this process, selecting the truths which shall thus rise into messages? In very many cases it is done by the influence of the audience, and by the preacher's contact with their minds. If the preacher, when he is not preach-

ing, makes opportunities for mingling with his people and talking over things with them—things that interest them, whether in books or in actual life—he will discover the problems both of faith and character which constitute their difficulties. If he have the true spirit of the priest, these points will find their way into his preaching before long. It would be difficult to imagine any better principle of guidance in choosing subjects than this. A ministry that moves from point to point of thought which has emerged from intercourse with men, and cleared itself into a succession of definite messages in the minister's own mind, is an ideal ministry. All the range of truth may thus be given to a minister, and it will be truth blended with pity and understanding and affection. Our sense of men's danger, our compassion for their perplexity, our desire to save their souls, all tend to die out in a comfortable routine of church work. Give your hearers much opportunity for keeping these things near to your heart, and so inspiring you with the messages which most they need. We shall presently return to this subject of human sympathy and its value for preaching.

Meanwhile a side-issue, which is nevertheless a matter of importance as well as interest, emerges here. Admitting the priestly element of human sympathy, and the part it plays in the various details of every service, how can its ends be most effectively served in the conception and construction of the service as a whole? For the service must have structure as much as the sermon or the prayers. Some plan or other must run through it from first to last, making of it a unity which the worshippers may recognise and appreciate. There are two opposed ideals for the structure of a service. One is, that in each service an attempt shall be made to satisfy all the varying religious needs of the people then and there assembled. For this end, hymns or psalms are sung expressing widely different moods. The prayers exhibit the same catho-

licity. The readings from Scripture are chosen on the same principle, each for its own special truth, and the sermon stands apart from all, bearing its independent message. There is much that can be said in favour of this method, and it will always commend itself to certain types of mind as the only adequate and even tolerable one. Yet I confess that in this I am a heretic, and grow more obstinate in my heresy as I grow older. Against even such weighty authority as that of Dr. Oswald Dykes, who vigorously maintains this method against its rival, I cannot adopt it. The other ideal for the structure of a single service is that it shall be dominated by one subject throughout all its parts. This is not to say that the sermon shall dominate the service, and draw every other item into line with itself. It is the subject which ought to dominate the sermon, the prayers, the reading, and the song. This will not apply directly to the intercessory prayer, which must by its very nature express a wide circle of human conditions. Even there, however, there will be a certain influence exerted by the subject of the service, which will attract from the infinite variety of possible objects of petition those which are specially cognate to itself. In every other detail of the service there will be an evident and intentional relevance to the main subject. The chief objection to this method is the one-sidedness of the service which it will produce. As in the case of the sermon, so here, that one-sidedness must be counterbalanced by other services which will lay emphasis on other aspects of truth. My conviction is that the bane of all our work is the distracted and discursive thinking upon religious things which is the habit of so very many of those to whom we preach. I am thinking of the cumulative effect of the service upon the minds and hearts and consciences of the worshippers. A service so catholic as to embrace all, or even a large variety, of religious types of experience, will be likely to leave as its result a vaguer

and more confused impression, than one which, in every part of it, drives home and enlarges upon one aspect of truth chosen for the occasion. The latter will be a clear unity of thought, and it will be remembered as such. It may be replied that the communication of thought is only one function of the service, and that this method will impoverish the worship in its endeavour to secure a rational unity. But there are many lines of thought along which one can worship, and there is nothing which must necessarily hamper worship, in the selection of cognate rather than diverse lines.

For the priestly as for the prophetic work of the preacher there is one quality which is absolutely indispensable, the quality of a high and consecrated imagination. This will appear perpetually in the remaining portion of these lectures. In the present connection, the value of imagination lies in its providing us with a means of escape from our own narrow circle of personal experiences and thoughts, that we may enter sympathetically into both the divine and the human regions between which we stand for the help of men. Imagination, both in preaching and in life, has been denounced by some writers as a dangerous gift, the enemy of studious application to the tasks of the college days, and a chief source of sensual temptation. Such writers might have gone one step farther, and warned us against life itself. No living man is half so safe either from wandering thoughts or from the lusts of the flesh as a dead man is. And the suppression of imagination is in fact the death of the spirit. The man who has suppressed his imagination, is to all intents and purposes an automaton, wonderfully contrived to perform mechanically the actions of a lifetime. For my part, I have always felt that if I had to die, I would rather die outright and be done with it, than go on my way in the untoward fashion of a walking corpse. I remember hearing a preacher of exceptionally powerful intellect say that

imagination is just the Latin word for bunkum. Yet it is precisely this contempt for imagination that may keep back some of us from attaining the supreme places of our lives.

Imagination enters into every part of the activity of man's spirit. I once asked a professor of mathematics, whose works are among the modern classics in their subject, what was the quality which was most essential to a mathematician, and he answered, Imagination. Without it, science and art would be equally impossible, history would be but a date-book, and geography a catalogue of names in foreign tongues. Above all other men the preacher must possess and cultivate it. Even for his sermon-building it is an absolute necessity. Without it he cannot even read a passage of Scripture decently or tell a story to the children. If he would make his text interesting at the outset of his discourse, he must apply imagination to it and to its context, reconstructing them as they actually were in their day. One of the most brilliant exponents of dramatic art in England tells us: "My experiences convinced me that an actor must imagine first and observe afterwards. It is no good observing life and bringing the result to the stage without selection, without a definite idea. The idea must come first, the realism afterwards." The same principle applies to the conception of sermons in the preacher's mind.

Thus in sermon-building imagination will play an important part. But far beyond that, in the priestly office of the preacher, imagination must be his guide and pioneer. He stands between heaven and earth, that he may help men to express themselves to God, and bring the love of God to bear upon all the incidents of their daily life. For this he must have an imagination of heavenly things—a "realising sense" of them, as the divines of former days used to put it. He must be familiar, not with the ways of God only, or His laws, but with Him-

self; and must walk freely, and as one at home, along the friendly streets of heaven. He must be equally familiar with humanity and its throbbing life. He must go where men are, and put himself into their place. Thus imagination, roving both high and low, must lead him in a double comradeship, a sympathetic and understanding fellowship, alike with God and men.

The divine element in imagination is the first necessity for the priest. It has been well said that the first qualification for the Christian minister is that he has seen Christ for himself and has been able to maintain the steady vision of Him; while the second qualification is that he has power to make other people see Him. The former is undoubtedly the first and fundamental necessity. The imagination of God, the power to realise and conceive of Him clearly and intimately, the sense of a direct and personal relation between the soul and His divine Spirit—these are absent from no true minister's experience. Our credentials of priesthood lie not in any ordination, but in the consciousness of God achieved in our own dedicated personality, and in the sense that God has called us to this office for the sake of others. Although the priestly office is no longer mediatorial in the Old Testament sense, yet it still retains the sacredness of a divine appointment and gift. "And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift."[1] In like manner the minister is given to the people as a gift to them by God, and his office is similarly given by God to the minister.

If this be so, it must be his first duty to cultivate "the style and manners of the sky." He must acquaint himself continually with God, and let his imagination play

[1] Numbers xviii. 6, 7.

upon heavenly things, until they have become to him intensest realities. He must be expert in the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life. "Come ye after Me," says Christ, "and I will make you fishers of men." We are apt, as was said by one who had much experience in evangelistic work, to go chiefly after the men we hope to win, thinking that the first thing required of us is to share their favourite pursuits and meet them in comradeship. Such comradeship is excellent and necessary, but the real secret of winning men is to go after Christ. He who does so will not fail to win men. There is something irresistible to men about the personality of one whose spirit dwells much in heavenly places. There is a certainty in his utterances about divine things which cannot be forged or imitated. And it is just that certainty which men most desire in their religious guide. They are, in the deep hearts of them, wistful for those things with which he is familiar; they are home-sick for the region which is manifestly his spirit's home.

In illustration of this, it may be worth our while to consider for a moment the interesting subject of the confessional. The Protestant Church, or at least all churches which desire to be called by the name of Protestant, has discarded this institution of the Roman Catholic Church. The grounds on which this was done are well known, and they amply justify the abolition. The power of absolution upon which the practice rests, is, in our belief, one which was never delegated by Christ to any of His ministers, and our hope of salvation is bound up with the assurance that He has retained it for Himself. The abuses to which the practice has led, and to which it must always remain liable, are in themselves a sufficient reason for its disuse. And yet the wonder is not that the confessional was a popular institution in the Roman Catholic Church, but that the Reformers had faith and courage enough to abolish it. A burdened conscience is the loneliest thing

on earth, and the relief of confession to a fellow-man is one of the most exquisite of all comforts. So it has come to pass that while confession has disappeared from the Protestant Church as an institution, it has survived as a practice. And those who hear most confessions are not the good-humoured men who "spare skin surface, smoothening truth away." They are generally those who are most faithful in dealing with the sins confessed. But they are always those who are felt to be intimate with God, familiar friends of Christ. For the soul of a true penitent is generally strangely wise. It crieth out after the living God, and the help it seeks in confession is help towards Him. It may be added that, apart from the confession of sin, it was found in the war that the mystic experiences which were described in a former lecture brought men to their chaplains and religious guides, that they might get some interpretation of that spiritual world which had opened to them in such unintelligible glimpses.

All this lays upon the minister who would be in any degree adequate to his priestly office, the demand for a high and constant "practice of the presence of God." It is a costly demand and an exacting one, but it is absolute. A low spiritual condition in a minister, means an irreparable loss to his congregation, and to the world in which he lives. For their sakes he must sanctify himself; which means not only that he must be holy, but that he must regard himself as holy, and habitually live on the platform of the ideal towards which he strives. He must be conscious of himself as the minister of divine mysteries, the bringer of divine reconciliations, the assistant at divine communions. He must not become so accustomed to such priestly offices as to take them for granted as ordinary things. His priesthood must never cease to surprise him, nor must he ever for an hour lose the sense of its wonder.

But the Christian minister, in his priestly office, is never

merely an individual helper of his fellow-men in spiritual things; he is also a churchman. He is the representative of the religious community as well as of the individual members of that community. There is, therefore, what may be called a church consciousness in all the relations between him and them. In his prayers, he is the minister of the altar, not only for this worshipper and that. He is sending out the cry of the Body of Christ to the Spirit of the Father. This is an aspect of the religious life which ought to be impressed emphatically upon all the members of our congregations. Of recent years, especially in Nonconformist communities, the idea of the Church has suffered some disparagement. In all democratic institutions there is the danger of the individual assuming too much importance and the community too little. But the Church is not only a great spiritual unity, comprising in itself the entire body of believing men and women on earth and in heaven; it is a divine institution, which an apostle did not hesitate to describe as the body of Christ. The individual believer, "by his faith in Christ, includes himself in the community of believers." That community is the home and the guardian of our mystic faith, and the minister is, by his ordination, one of its appointed officers. He should not forget or ignore this fact. He cannot be blind to the value of many religious institutions which are outside the Church's pale. He may welcome them, co-operate with them so far as that is in his power, thank God for them and for the service they are rendering; yet, as for himself, he is a churchman, a believer in the reality and the potency of the Church as the chief agent of Christian religion in the world. The more loyal he is to her, the more powerful for permanent good will his ministry prove.

He will be loyal also to his denomination. Just as the best guarantee for a true cosmopolitanism is a hearty patriotism, so the best way of showing reverence for the

general Church of Christ is to identify oneself with that particular branch of it within which one's lot is cast. Yet the priest least of all has the right to be a sectarian in any narrow or exclusive sense. His office, with its double connection with God and men, must surely preserve him from any such temptation, for the human needs to which he especially ministers are as wide as humanity itself, and the divine mercy of which he is the bearer is wider still. One of the great anomalies of Christendom is the denominationalism of the Roman Catholic Church. The ideal of the Roman priesthood, with all its errors, is yet an ideal full of human understanding and compassion; but the exclusive claims of the Roman Church have made her priests the representatives of the narrowest of all religious sects. A similar fate must befall all churches whose denominational loyalties degenerate into an exclusive claim. In the war such claims were pilloried in all their littleness and all their absurdity. Under the very guns, and face to face with death, there were men who found themselves unable to escape from the prison-house of their intolerable creed, and stories of them provided amusement for many a mess. There was the padre—real or imaginary—who spoke so of his church that an officer exclaimed, "Why, Padre, I do believe you think that your church is the only way to heaven." To which the reply was, "Oh, no, I wouldn't say that exactly, but certainly there is no other way by which any gentleman would think of going." There were the four corpses of ——. One was a Presbyterian, the next an Episcopalian, the next a Jew, and the fourth a Roman Catholic. They lay waiting in the mortuary for burial, the times of their respective services being fixed with a quarter of an hour's interval between each. By some misunderstanding, the first padre came at the end instead of the beginning. So it came to pass that the Episcopalian buried the Presbyterian, the Jew buried the

Episcopalian, the Roman Catholic buried the Jew, and the Presbyterian buried the Roman Catholic. It would not be edifying to put on record the speculations of the mess-room as to what happened on the other side in connection with these perplexing ceremonies. In such instances —and many such occurred—the arrogance of sectarianism, with its *nulla salus extra ecclesiam,* was simply laughed out of court. More and more the exclusiveness and prejudice with which men of various churches came out, were toned down and softened. In many cases they vanished altogether. At the conferences of padres and the meetings of Y. M. C. A. leaders, sectarian divisions melted like ice in springtime, and all but a few extremists acknowledged their oneness with kindred spirits, in the greater unity of common suffering and service. The fierce light of the war showed all such questions in their true proportions, correcting their superficial and trifling claims with the dire facts of sacrifice and love and death.

The conviction which our experience of the war confirmed in many of us beyond all possibility of doubt, was that denomination is essentially a question of temperament. In those whose sectarian zeal runs off into bigotry, it is a case of temperament masquerading as conviction. To the end of time there will be some who find in one church, and others who find in another church, the way of worship most congenial to their natural temperament, and therefore most helpful to their religious life. So there will always be Protestants and Catholics, Episcopalians and Nonconformists. It is entirely impossible for any sect to convince the world that it alone has legitimate historic continuity with the early Christian Church, and so with Jesus and the apostles. Nor, if such a claim could be established, would it be valid in face of new developments. If, in the evolution of social and religious history, types of religious experience have emerged for which the historic Church fails to provide, if there are

needs which it cannot meet, then most certainly in God's providence a Church will arise which does meet those needs, and the religious efficiency of such a Church will be its charter of validity as a true part of the Church of Christ. Nor is this view in any way incompatible with denominational loyalty. It is surely a truer loyalty to one's denomination to make men love it for its catholicity of outlook upon other sects, than to make them hate it for its spiritual arrogance, and its claim to be the exclusive channel of grace even to those who do not find it a channel of grace at all. Certainly the war led some of us to feel very strongly about these things. In the light of battle, denominational propaganda appeared criminal rather than merely petty: in the darkness of wards where wounded men lay dying, sectarian exclusiveness seemed terribly like the sin against the Holy Ghost.

We have been considering the divine side of the priest's equipment, and the necessity for imagination of that side. Not less urgent is the demand for strong and clear imagination of the human side—in other words, for genuine and active human sympathy. The mere prophet may be a recluse, but that the priest can never be. The main object of preaching is, as we have seen, appeal; but appeal implies a loving understanding of those to whom we are appealing, which will make our appeal a piece of genuine human friendship. It is felt about some preachers that "Never dares the man put off the prophet." The dignified aloofness of the preacher is the worst enemy of his effectiveness. It leads him to misjudge men, to see them in the light only of their sins and not of their temptations, and to treat those sins with scorn and sneering, or at least with scolding and denunciation. In his commentary on Isaiah lviii., Dr. George Adam Smith deals with this matter. "Perhaps no subject more readily provokes to satire and sneers than the subject of the chapter—the union of formal religion and unlovely life. And yet in the chapter

there is not a sneer from first to last. The speaker suppresses the temptation to use his nasal tones, and utters, not as the satirist, but as the prophet. For his purpose is not to sport with his people's hypocrisy, but to sweep them out of it. Before he has done, his urgent speech, that has not lingered to sneer nor exhausted itself in screaming, passes forth to spend its unchecked impetus upon final promise and gospel. It is a wise lesson from a master preacher, and half of the fruitlessness of modern preaching is due to the neglect of it. The pulpit tempts men to be either too bold or too timid about sin; either to whisper or to scold; to emphasise or to exaggerate; to be conventional or hysterical. But two things are necessary—the facts must be stated, and the whole manhood of the preacher, and not only his scorn or only his anger, or only an official temper, brought to bear upon them."[1] Last year there came into my possession a little volume of verse composed by a wandering minstrel who was formerly a familiar figure in the villages and towns of Deeside. There is a certain rough genius in the songs, and a very frank and winsome fellowship with humanity in its poorer walks. But against the clergy the singer's bitterness is vitriolic, and every reference to them is a protest against either the cruelty of their preaching of hell, or the selfishness of their lives. There is much in the poetry of Robert Burns to the same effect. The unfairness of such attacks is evident enough. Yet that which lies behind them is the idea that ministers are not only remote from human life, but that from their superior station they are taking sides against men. Dr. Henry Ward Beecher has given expression to the same sentiment in a very bold and forcible passage. Describing certain preachers of great learning and ability, he notes the fact that their ministry was never very fruitful, and he gives his opinion as to the reason for this. It is "that their sympathy ran almost

[1] *The Book of Isaiah, xl.-lxvi.*, p. 417.

exclusively toward God. They were on God's side altogether. They were always vindicating God. They were upholding the divine government. And they produced, if I may say so, the feeling that they were God's attorneys, that they were special pleaders on that side. . . . They failed because they had too exclusive a sympathy with God."[1]

There was no feature of the war more marked than the wealth of human sympathy which it generated. There, if the preacher were to have any chance at all, he must be very little of the parson and very much of the man. The conditions were peculiar, and in many respects unprecedented in the lives of those who preached to soldiers in the field. The one thing needful was sympathy, and its springs were opened most abundantly. I knew one preacher who had broken down under the strain. Standing on the platform of a street-car in one of the bases, he found himself side by side with a soldier laden with all his kit, on his way to an outlying hospital. Very wearily and bitterly the boy said to him, "I'm on the scrap-heap": but when the preacher answered, "So am I," they became old friends on the spot. I myself, late one night in a receiving-tent for walking wounded, found a lad utterly exhausted with wounds and drenched with rain. Nothing would induce him to touch the tea that had been given him, nor to sign a post card to his friends. After many attempts, I discovered at last that his home was on the banks of a familiar stream in the Scottish Lowlands. Pool by pool I fished that stream for him, now landing a trout, then missing a grayling, changing flies and shortening or lengthening the line. The transformation was one of the most wonderful memories of my life, and soon he was enjoying a hearty meal and writing his post card with smiles and laughter. Of one dying boy I knew—and his was not the only case—whose last re-

[1] *Lectures on Preaching,* first series, pp. 48, 49.

quest was to the chaplain at his bedside that he would kiss him before he died.

The secret of the extraordinary success of the Y. M. C. A. in the war was mainly this. It regained humanity in religion, first for itself and then for countless thousands of those to whom it ministered. It showed an almost instinctive power of attracting to itself as workers, men and women who were gifted with a positive genius for just being human. Some of these spoke so familiarly of God, and understood so exactly the feelings of a soldier's heart, that rough boys would say of them in a kind of awed yet affectionate whisper, that they "lived in heaven." Such workers never found it difficult to bring in the subject of religion. They began with the fighting or the march, and by swift degrees the conversation slid back to the distant home across the sea, and then, before one could realise it, to Jesus Christ Himself. The counter of the canteen did it. If you went into a group of khaki in the hut and began at once to talk familiarly, you were apt to feel an awkwardness about the situation, and such attempts would sometimes fail. So it came about that preachers and lecturers often found it wisest to spend a little time before or after speaking in selling at the counter. No doubt they sometimes sold in ignorance of the current prices, and brought confusion to the book-keeping of the leader. But it was a thousand times worth its cost. There is but one way of reaching a man's sympathy, and that is to go where he lives, and put yourself in his place. So this much-discussed business of selling tea and food and little luxuries to men weary and hungry and thirsty, was in itself essentially religious work, apart from its opportunities for speech upon religious things. Often, in the dim light of the lamp that swung from the rafters of a hut, I have come in out of the night, and seen those men and women handing out such comforts to the men. To me it seemed as if they

were the priests of the living God, and the things they handled were sacramental elements. And I seemed to hear a voice behind them saying, "I was hungry and ye gave Me meat, thirsty and ye gave Me drink. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me."

It is to be hoped that a new era has dawned upon our church life, in which we shall be able to gather young men about us at home as we gathered them on the field. There is room for such work in most congregations. Is it too much to hope that huts may be erected or halls opened, beside great numbers of churches, in which men and women who have learned their lesson in the war will still "carry on"? It is very earnestly to be hoped that this problem will not prove too difficult for the ingenuity of Christian people, and that the link formed between the Church and the Y. M. C. A. will not be broken. Indeed, there is no real division between the two agencies. The Y. M. C. A. *is* the Church, in one of its most important departments. It was created, it is financed, and it is manned mainly by the Church, through its members. It offers to the Church the wonderful wealth of new experience and new talent it has gained. If that offer is understood and accepted, it may yet prove to be the connecting link between the Church and those at her gates to whom hitherto she has had least access.

But for us ministers of churches, the lesson of all this is primarily a lesson in human sympathy. May I make a digression here, to note one department of our work which offers us endless opportunities for having that sympathy drawn out? I refer to our preaching to children. This is not really a digression, for it was precisely the childlikeness of the spirit of the soldier which made the opportunities of the war. The children in our churches are the great humanisers of congregational life. It is they who keep the spirit both of the preacher and the

congregation young. That is an inestimable service, for there is really no necessity for anyone to lose the freshness of his childhood, although it is too often lost. I wish I could impress upon you with sufficient earnestness the sin and danger of growing up! Well, the children must be our deliverers here. They come to church, and, until we make it impossible, they like coming. The most enjoyable and often the most profitable part of the whole service is the children's address. Upon occasions, as may be found desirable, we may conduct a whole service for the children. But I would venture to suggest, and even to urge upon every preacher, that a few minutes of his regular service, at least once every Sunday, should be devoted to the children. Objections have been raised to this practice, on the ground that it interferes with the continuity of the service. But it need not interfere, unless we choose that it shall. Some kinds of children's sermon are indeed irrelevant. Children are sometimes addressed as if they were imbecile or feeble-minded adults. The address is not planned to accomplish anything or to lead anywhere. A handful of miscellaneous anecdotes, with the regulation pointing of the morals of them, is not an address, but an insult to very keenly intelligent young minds. I have pled for structure both in the sermon and in the service, and the plea is applicable here. Why not make the children's address upon the same subject as the sermon? By doing this you may enlist their interest for the sermon itself. It is a mistake to imagine that there is a natural and invincible antipathy between children and sermons. The sermon is not, or ought not to be, too difficult for them, and therefore dull. The trouble is to catch their interest in the subject and secure an entrance, showing them, as it were, the way in. If this is done in their own little sermon, they will recognise parts of the other sermon, and feel themselves familiar and at home in it. By this simple expedient much of our

ordinary preaching may hold their interest. Think over the sermon you intend to preach. Imagine yourself explaining it to a little child, and you will be astonished to discover how possible and how fascinating the exercise is. Robert Browning is generally regarded as one of the most unintelligible of poets. No one would think of reading any of his poems to a child, with the exception of "The Pied Piper" and perhaps one or two others. Yet there is no poet whose works are more easily used in children's sermons. The thought behind the condensed and often crabbed language is clear and vivid. The images are such as seize the imagination strongly. Read over some of his familiar poems, and in your own language tell them to a child: you will find them an endless treasury of children's sermons. But our own sermons are surely not more unintelligible than his poems. By trying this experiment with your sermon you may find that your thinking is not so clear as it might be, and that your images are lacking in sharpness of edge. So you will discover not only a method for preaching to children, but an excellent criterion and corrective for your discourse to their elders. Besides, in the children's sermon you may preach to these same elders also. There are things which we all desire to say to them, and yet find ourselves unequal to saying. In the children's sermon you may get some of these things said.

To return to our main theme, the preacher who would fulfil the priestly office of the ministry must be a humanist, not only in the sense of a student of human nature, but of a lover of it, an expert in it. He must be one whose delights are with the sons of men. His business among men is to interpret their experience to them, and to enable them freely to utter their hearts to God. John Bunyan, whose genius for humanity is as remarkable as his insight into the secret of the Lord, has given us, in his

"Help" and his "Interpreter," two immortal models of this type. Dr. Kerr Bain, in his commentary on the *Pilgrim's Progress,* asserts that "incomparably the greatest element in the warrant of any man who would hold the office of the Christian ministry is an earnest yet humble desire in himself to be helpful to men in the concerns of their spirits."[1] Such a sower of the good seed "strides cheerfully over the fields of life with the broad swing of an unthrifty mind."[2] It is a very rich and attractive type of manhood and of ministry. No doubt it has its dangers. Those who have a strong natural delight in life, and who love the world they live in, may need to be on their guard against that secularity of spirit in which their fellow-mortals come to be for them no more than a part of the brilliant spectacle of life, fellows in its fascinating adventure, and right good fellows in its companionship. Those whose hearts are naturally impulsive and whose sympathies are quick, may find it necessary to exercise unwelcome self-restraint, lest their ministry draw them into premature or excessive intimacies, impossible to maintain and equally impossible to diminish gracefully or without wounding the sensitive. Yet in this, as in all else, the greatest risk is to decline the adventure. We are not ministers in order primarily to preserve our own reputation for immaculate caution, but to help our fellows as we may. The preacher who preserves his humanism is at least safe from the risk of professionalism. I have often turned to the saying of a very charming little friend of mine, and found in it much wisdom. She was little more than a baby, but her favourite game was that of conducting religious services. Once, after a prodigious string of intimations and a sermon of longer duration than usual, she suddenly ended

[1] *The People of the Pilgrimage,* ii. 31.

[2] Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel,* first series, xlv.

with this closing prayer, "O Lord, I've been long enough a minister; please make me just a nice, nice gentleman."

In a word, it is sympathy that is required of us. The interpreter must know, as only sympathy can let him know, the souls he has to interpret. There is a sort of sympathy, which may be called dramatic sympathy, that is of great value to the preacher. It is the result of a quickened imagination playing upon a wide knowledge of men's lives. This, as has already been said, is the secret of Robert Browning, whose miraculous knowledge of the inner life of all sorts and conditions of people is second only to Shakespeare's, if indeed it be second. Some measure of this dramatic sympathy, which will enable them to get down among the secret springs of action, and imagine the lives of others as it were from within, is indispensable for the work of those who have to minister to large numbers and wide varieties of people.

Yet Browning, with all his power of dramatic sympathy, does not reach so many hearts as some much simpler poets do, such as Whittier or Longfellow. There is another sort of sympathy, not dependent either on such wide knowledge or such powerful imagination—the sympathy of the open-hearted. You will reach a truer knowledge of men by loving them and keeping your heart open to them, than by studying their ways for a lifetime. Influence depends on sensitiveness, both in ourselves and in those we touch. If we can preserve our own fingertips, and if we can discern and select the moment when our people also are sensitive, our influence will be unbounded. But the only way in which we can do either of these things is by unfeigned and generous affection. No man can ever fully interpret any experience in another, which he himself has not in some measure passed through. It is when we have identified ourselves with them not only in imagination but in love, when we have felt the pressure of their temptations, doubts, and fears

pressing also on ourselves, when we have actually shared the strain and anxiety of their moral and spiritual life, wearing our spirit as they are wearing theirs—it is only then that we are perfect interpreters.

This intense humanity, which is one of the most important qualifications for the ministry in the present time, is the characteristically priestly temper. The priest idea combines in itself the two conceptions of holiness and humanness—a combination by no means difficult to effect, seeing that, derivatively, "holy" and "healthy" are the same. To the priest, Montaigne's contempt for "the ignorance of the first I meet" is impossible for he is one "who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way." It is in the priestly Epistle to the Hebrews that this ideal finds its tenderest and most perfect expression, where the Priest is not one "that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are."[1] In our measure, such high office is bestowed upon us also. It is given to us as preachers to be afflicted in all our people's afflictions and to bear upon our own breasts their sins and sorrows, in a human sympathy which is strong to save.

[1] Hebrews iv. 15, v. 2.

## *LECTURE VIII*

### *The Preacher as Prophet*

IN this last lecture we reach the highest point in our conception of the preacher, the most direct and natural of his functions. There is, indeed, no rivalry between the priestly and the prophetic ideals of the preacher's office. To some extent all preachers must keep both ideals before them and endeavour to realise both. Some will find themselves better fitted for the one and some for the other, and in these matters there is no absolute better or worse, which would make it the duty of all who preach to assume the exclusive rôle either of priest or of prophet. In all such choices (e.g. the choice between the home and foreign fields), it is a profound mistake to set up a universal standard and to apply it to every case. The best way for every man to choose is not necessarily the most self-denying or the most humble sphere, nor is it the pleasantest or the most conspicuous. As a matter of fact, the thing which a man likes best to do is probably the thing which he will do most effectively, but the only wise rule for guidance is efficiency. The one question to ask is whether a man will make the fullest and most effective use of his powers and gifts in this line of preaching or in that.

Yet it does seem clear that the preacher should consider himself called primarily to be a prophet, so far as that is possible to him. You will remember that this was the theme of Dr. Horton's *Verbum Dei,* and that much controversy arose regarding the main contention of the book. That contention is that "every living preacher must receive his message in a communication direct from God, and the constant purpose of his life must be to re-

ceive it uncorrupted, and to deliver it without addition or subtraction."[1] That is the prophetic conception of preaching, the ideal of the preacher as prophet.

Every great and perpetual spiritual office is created by some permanent human need. Prophecy may have many different tasks at different periods, and some of these may change or become obsolete.[2] But the permanent need which keeps the office filled from generation to generation is that of interpretation. As the interpreter of God to man, as well as of man to himself, the prophet is an eternal institution, the product of no one age but the necessity of all ages. Every human being finds himself at times "moving about in worlds not realised." Either at the call of conscience, or of emotion, or of far-wandering thoughts, he strays forth from the understood world of sense, and finds himself among profound mysteries. As was the case with the soldiers in the war, the eternal comes on him and claims him. His hand has touched God's hand, but he cannot see God nor express in clear form those eternal truths among which he wanders. William Law has told us, "Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God, within itself." But for this discovery most men will need a prophet's aid. And that is the task of the prophet, that awful work of revelation, by which he may make men see and understand those spiritual realities after which they vaguely grope. May God have mercy on all us poor men, who have to add their own words to His, that they may reveal Him to their fellow-mortals!

[1] *Verbum Dei*, p. 17.

[2] It does not fall within the scope of these lectures, nor would their limits allow it, to discuss the relation of the modern preacher's prophesying to that of the prophets of the Bible, nor to discuss the points in which his inspiration differs from theirs. It is enough that we believe God's ministers to be still in direct communication with Him, and to have power to break the silence of God with speech in which men will recognise His authentic word.

Interpretation can be given in various ways and through many different media. Professor Seeley has expressed, in a passage of much distinction, the modern view that science, art, and morals is each of them a line of revelation.[1] Especially the poets may be prophetic, and the artists. In early Greece this was the prerogative of the poets. Pindar says of his own songs that "it was a god who gave the words; the poet was but the interpreter." The disciples of modern poets make the same claim for them with no less conviction. On the other hand, there are and have been poets who do not profess to give any interpretation of life, but write for the mere music of words and the choric dance of emotions. Similarly there are two schools of art. The ideal of one of those schools is "art for art's sake"; and such art is concerned solely with the perfect expression of the personality of the artist, taking no cognisance of any message or practical truth which may be conveyed. The other school declares that the mission of art is "to urge men to higher things and thoughts." Art, for the one school, is merely the voiceless mirror of nature, or of the artist's view of nature; for the other, art is the prophetess. Each has much to say for itself, and on the whole, in respect of purely artistic ideal, the former school seems the more convincing.

But with preaching it is different. It takes rank with Pindar and with G. F. Watts, and stands at the head of all other modes of prophecy. There are, indeed, two schools of preaching also. Some preachers and hearers take "Art for art's sake" as their motto. There are many interesting and beautiful phases of life which the average man is pleased to hear about. They direct his thoughts and feelings pleasantly, giving him at the same time the agreeable idea that he is religiously employed. The function of this kind of preaching is to keep him in that placid

[1] *Natural Religion,* ch. i.

and amiable mood, without any ulterior design upon his actions or his character. But ours is another ideal for the preacher. He is the man who, it may be with rude insistence, reveals men to themselves and God to men. This kind of preaching has descended to modern times from the Hebrew prophets and the apostles of Christ. From time to time there have been revivals of the wilder kinds of ancient prophecy in the Christian Church, but sooner or later these gave way to preaching. Since then, preaching has branched out into many eccentric varieties, from the dreary lecture to the serio-comic harangue. Some of these have obviously failed to meet any real human need, and people are asking to-day whether the day of the pulpit is not over, and whether it is not high time that it were. The day of such kinds of pulpit work never yet dawned, and never will. But through all the ages of the past there has been a continuous strain of preaching which has retained its heritage from the ancient prophecy, and the day of genuinely prophetic preaching will never be over. There is nothing that can take its place. Books and newspapers are good for many things, and they have taken over many parts of the work done by the preacher of former days, and so have enlightened and cleared his task for him. But as for that task itself, the essentially prophetic task in which a living personality flings itself upon the lives of those who hear, nothing can ever dislodge it from its throne among influences and inspirations. So long as clouds and darkness hang over the spiritual region of man's thought, so long will he who emerges upon his fellows with words of God to speak find his audience. Preaching of that sort is an eternal thing.

"While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit."[1]

[1] James Russell Lowell, quoted in *Verbum Dei*, p. 141.

It is convenient to consider the prophetic aspect of preaching in two departments—the prophet and his message, and the prophet and his audience.

1. *The prophet and his message.* The ideal of interpretation gives us at the outset this principle, that it is mainly with thoughts that we have to deal, and that our work must maintain the closest relation with intellect and reason. It is true, as Justin M'Carthy tells us, that "oratory has been well described as the fusion of reason with passion," and that "passion always carries something of the imaginative along with it."[1] Nothing is more futile, for instance, than an academic denunciation of sin, in which there is no element of personal indignation or pity. Yet thought and not passion is the first essential. Imagination which is not playing upon a sufficiently solid mass of thought may produce eloquence either of the artistic or of the poetic kind, but it will never produce preaching. Even faith which is wholly devoid of reason evaporates like the last puff of steam when the boiler has gone dry. Ultimately it is truth we have to trust to, it is thought we have to work upon. The preacher must be a man of strong understanding, of masculine thinking, and of intellectual health. "The saviour of our children will be the man who has thought out truth more truly than any other of his time, who possesses and is possessed by that truth, and can state it in terms which persuade, which convince, and which rekindle those mighty spiritual enthusiasms which alone can make a time great and equip a generation as strong sons of God."[2]

One immediate and important consequence of this principle is that our preaching must be mainly positive and not negative. When one reads the call of the prophet Isaiah as he records it in the sixth chapter of his book, one is suddenly lifted up to heaven, and the preaching

[1] *A History of Our Own Times,* ch. ii.
[2] Armstrong.

emerges from the very throne of God. All the rush of the Spirit is there, transforming a man's life and commanding it, until the prophet consents to his commission in the eager cry, "Here am I, send me." But the words that follow, in which he receives the message he is to proclaim, sound like one of the most dismal anticlimaxes in all literature, a message of sheer denunciation. In the last verse, however, we find the seed of undying hope, which was soon to grow into the most heartening and inspiring gospel that was ever uttered by any man of old. The anticlimax may be expected in the experience of every preacher. As he brings his high hopes and gorgeous flaming ideals down to the actual facts of the life to which he is to preach, he must often be confronted with the bitter task of rebuking that life's evil and sending forth his warning to heavy ears and unseeing eyes. Alas! how often does he miss the saving seed of hope and righteousness which Isaiah found and to which he gave so large and splendid an expression. The note of the preaching of Jesus was its positive teaching and exhortation. For the "Thou shalt not" of the Pharisees He proclaimed the "Thou shalt" of His own new law. But we too often slide back unconsciously to the negative fashion, and measure our faithfulness by the strength of our denunciations. The reason for this is sometimes sheer poverty of thought. Negative preaching, occupied mainly with threatening and invective, is far easier than the positive inculcation of virtue and of faith. It requires less thinking. The evil is naturally interesting, and it is abundantly ready to one's hand. It thrusts itself upon one's notice and easily seizes one's imagination. The good is seldom so evident, and perfect things are hidden, and must be sought and found. To make goodness fascinating and faith convincing involves a far higher exercise of intellect than is required for the pillorying and scourging of sensational crime and glaring error. It implies a

mind strenuously exercised among good thoughts, until it has built of them the home in which it habitually dwells. Positive preaching is more difficult than negative, but in the main it is infinitely more effective.

But now arises a further question. Those truths about God, those thoughts about life, which are to interpret men to themselves and God to men—how does the prophet attain to them? The answer, implied in the very name of prophet, is that he receives them from God. But let us look into this answer and see what it means. For there is a danger of superstition here, and of much loose and indefinite thinking. There is nothing magical in the reception of God's word by the prophet. In His communications with men, God uses regular and ascertainable means of imparting His message to them. Of course there are occasional exceptions to all such rules as this—eccentricities of inspiration, some of which may be quite beyond our power of explaining or analysing. But the normal process is clear. A man begins with *experience and study;* out of these rise *visions* of certain truths which are specially direct and certain; finally, these truths grow more and more imperative in their demand that he shall proclaim them, and that is the preacher's *call.* We shall follow out this process in detail, for it is of central importance.

(1) *Experience.* This is the main point in the whole purpose of these lectures, the founding of preaching upon experience. Hitherto we have dwelt chiefly upon the experience of the hearer: now we must insist on the experience of the preacher. Neither contention is in any sense a new one. My venerable colleague, Dr. Alexander Whyte, has spent a lifetime in advocating and practising preaching of the most intimately experiential kind. No one who knows the heart-searching reach of his work, and its awful grip on the conscience, will ever be in any doubt as to this secret of prophetic preaching. He has

been the champion of experience in an age that was running after many fantastic doctrines. He learned it from his favourite Puritans, from the Covenanting ministers of Scotland, from the mystics of Italy and France and Germany. John Bunyan, of whose works he has given us so brilliant an interpretation, expressly declares that in many cases he preached entirely from his own experience, and made no use of other lines. He tells us that when for two years he preached nothing but sin and hell, it was because "I carried that fire in my conscience which I persuaded them to beware of." Of all the lessons which the modern preacher has to learn from the Puritans, this is perhaps the soundest and the greatest. Yet it is no mere Puritan demand. It is interesting to set alongside of it this, from Eugenie de Guerin, one of the choice spirits of the Roman Catholic Church in France: "Our new curé cannot supply the place [of the old one]: he is so young, and then he is so inexperienced, so undecided." "It needs firmness to pluck a soul out of the midst of the world, and to uphold it against the assaults of flesh and blood." Undoubtedly such firmness can be found only in those who have learned it first in dealing with their own souls.

In order to be a true prophet, the preacher must know God and find out the truth about life, not by hearsay, but in his own experience. It is for his own soul that he must first find interpretations. He must drink deep draughts of life, living intensely and strenuously. Some prophets have written the message that they sent forth in their own heart's blood, and no message has ever been or will ever be very convincing that has not a dash of the prophet's blood upon it. Behind every prophet's preaching there lies his wilderness, where he has fought alone with devils and been aware of the presence both of wild beasts and angels. There he must have wrestled with doubt until his thinking grew clear and articulate; he must have

fought for character against temptation. So when he comes forth to men, he must ever seem to meet them as one who is fighting their battle on ground where he has won his own.

This is fairly obvious, but there are several ways of utilising one's own personal experience for preaching. There are some preachers who habitually narrate to their congregations incidents in their own lives. This is an extremely dangerous habit. It fosters an undue sense of one's own importance, or at least it suggests that idea to some of those who are subjected to the necessity of listening to it. Again, since personal experience is always far more interesting to the person who underwent it than to anybody else, such preaching is apt to become wearisome. Reminiscences of our own lives are lit up for ourselves by the thousand lights of memory which fit them into their places in the years gone by. To the hearer they have none of the advantage of such personal setting. So it happens that a speech full of personal anecdote and reminiscence may be intensely interesting to the speaker, while it may bore the hearer as trivial and pointless. Yet personal reminiscence, if it be kept for rare occasions, if it be strictly relevant to the theme it is meant to illustrate, and especially if it have an intrinsic and vital interest of its own, may be used with telling effect.

Much freer use may be made of one's personal experiences, if we tell them without mentioning that they are our own. A Scottish professor used to advise his students to remember their own sins and charge them upon the congregation. This may be legitimate upon occasion, but as a habit it would seem to have the serious danger of transforming the preacher into a hypocrite of a peculiarly hardened type. The history of the Church is full of warnings as to the moral dangers which beset all ecclesiastics, who, more than any other class of men, are

tempted to run their own souls into danger in striving for success in their work. But even the humblest preacher has to watch against the divorce of personal character from professional efficiency. One of the most astonishing and alarming of phenomena is the powerful preacher who is also a man who is morally unsound. Incredible as it may seem, it is certainly true that a life in some respects bad, may go with good, and even with fruitful, preaching. It is even true that, while preaching, such a man may be genuine in his desire to do good, and that his words may come from pure and earnest depths in his heart. His preaching may actually be the more passionate and heart-searching from his intimate acquaintance with the sins he denounces, and the imaginations and desires which are the sources of these sins. This, however, is but one illustration of the anonymous use which the preacher may make of his own personal experiences. It is so serious and dreadful an instance that it could not be right to let it pass unnoticed. In other less dangerous regions, the method of anonymous reminiscence may be safely and usefully followed, upon the same conditions as were given for direct narration, viz. strictest relevancy and independent vital interest.

But apart from either of these deliberate ways of using the preacher's personality for the uses of his sermon, there remains the fact that that personal element is bound to enter into all preaching. The whole discipline of life is training a man for his work, and entering into the texture of that work. In reading a book we are always conscious of a double strand of influence. There is the book, a collection of facts, ideas, arguments, or emotions. But there is also the spirit which is speaking to us about these. Take, at random, four books of travel and adventure—Du Chaillu's *Land of the Midnight Sun,* Marbot's *Memoirs* of his part in the campaigns of Napoleon, Nansen's *Farthest North,* Stanley's *Darkest Africa.* It is thirty or

forty years since I read those books, and I have long ago forgotten most of the details in them: but the four men so revealed themselves to me then that I still know them as living characters. In like manner sermons provide us not only with facts, arguments, and illustrations, but with the preacher's sense of these, and so make us acquainted with his mind. They give us incentives and appeals for faith and conduct, but behind these we feel the force of the person who is appealing. No more memorable course of Lyman Beecher Lectures has ever been delivered here than that of Bishop Phillips Brooks in 1876-77. I need not remind you—for I trust that great classic is familiar to you all—that its main theme is the relation to one another of the two essential elements of preaching—truth and personality. Without our power to prevent it, nay even, it may be, in spite of ourselves, our own personality is going out upon our congregations along with the truths we are proclaiming. The responsibility for our own personal character is therefore the greatest of all our responsibilities. Tennyson's lines are well known:

> "How pure at heart and sound in head,
> With what divine affections bold,
> Should be the man whose thought would hold
> An hour's communion with the dead."[1]

This is a great saying, and we all assent to it. Yet surely it applies with equal if not with greater force to those whose fate it is to hold an hour's communion with the living, who have called to them for guidance in the meaning and the conduct of life.

(2) Along with experience there must be *study,* especially in an age like this, when the preacher's task is to interpret God and life to men who are reading widely for themselves. The message given to a preaching man is not a spontaneous and independent revelation, which would be identically the same whether he had read any-

[1] *In Memoriam,* xciv.

thing or not. Only extremists will tell you that the preacher ought simply to depend upon the guidance of the Spirit at the moment, and that diligence in preparation is incompatible with the prophetic ideal. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every book you read will contribute to your message, and become part of the inspiration of the Spirit. The opposite view corresponds exactly to that of the plenary and *verbatim* inspiration of the Scriptures in its crudest form, the relation between the Spirit and the man whom He inspires being simply that of flute-player and flute. The prophets of the Bible used for their prophesying every means of education available in their times and circumstances. Each of them was the child of the past as he knew it, and his knowledge of it, and of all else that he knew, can be traced in the things which he said. The modern study of the developing consciousness of Jesus is founded upon the presupposition that the same principle applies to the utterances even of the Saviour Himself.[1] We have quoted John Bunyan as an instance of a man who preached and wrote in large measure from his own experiences unaided by study. Yet, as I have pointed out elsewhere, there are undeniable traces of other literature in his writings, and that not merely in respect of wayside illustrations, but of suggestions for some of the most fundamental parts of his teaching. The fact is that there is no such phenomenon as a prophet receiving a message which is not affected, and so far limited, by his own knowledge acquired in ordinary ways. God does not give us revelations regarding matters of fact which our own study ought to give us; but if we shall be at pains to acquire such knowledge, God will show us its bearings and its use. Study is not only compatible with prophetic utterance: it is ab-

[1] Cf. Baldensperger, *The Self-Consciousness of Jesus;* Schwartzkopff, *The Prophecies of Jesus,* etc.; Robertson, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus.*

solutely essential to it. He who would aspire to the high office of the prophet must serve his apprenticeship as a humble and faithful student.

(3) *Vision.* Experience and study are not enough. Neither the man of experience nor the man of books is necessarily a prophet. There must be a selection among the various ideas and impulses gathered in these two ways—a selection not made voluntarily *by* the preacher, but made *in* him by a higher Power. Of all his varied gatherings, some will become different from the rest—more inevitable, more urgent. "The first thing that is necessary in an orator," says Hichens, "if he is to be successful with an audience, is confidence in himself, a conviction that he has something to say which is worth saying, which has to be said."[1] This confidence will be found to attach itself, not to the whole of any man's discourse, but to a certain part of it which includes only the man's enthusiastic convictions. These detach themselves from the rest of his opinions, and become a kind of intuitive and brilliant group of certainties, which form the core or nucleus of his thinking. Such groups may well come under the name of vision, for the note of them is their certainty and directness of truth. Regarding these, John Bunyan writes: "I could not be contented with saying 'I believe and am sure'; methought I was more than sure."

How, then, do such visions come to the preacher? "A fact," says Martin Conway, "must be won from the unknown by the man of science, brought into connection with other facts by the philosopher, finally made strong for good by the idealist—poet, artist, prophet—call him what you please."[2] The preacher's experience and study must do for him the work here attributed to the man of science and the philosopher. Within the preacher's own

[1] *The Dweller on the Threshold,* ch. ii.
[2] *The Dawn of Art,* p. 11.

mind the results thus gained must be "made strong for good" in that group of exceptionally brilliant convictions to which we have attached the name of vision. I repeat emphatically the assertion that reliable vision does not come without experience and study behind it. No prophecy comes by the untutored will of man; only prejudice and illusion come at the call of the man's inclination. He does not say, "Go to, I shall prophesy," and then merely have to open his mouth. Behind all true vision there lies self-knowledge found many a time with shame, the struggle for character against temptation, arduous meditation, determined prayer, and much self-denial. These, and all the study the man has done, form the complex out of which vision will arise. The mind thus trained and stored has in it the embryonic seed-bed of vision, which is born in us as Aphrodite was born, rising out of the surging sea of a man's inner life, with all its labour and thought. Let a man honestly do his work of living, reading, and thinking. He will find that some ideas are continually sinking out of sight, while others are rising to greater and greater clearness. Joubert beautifully defines the process: "These spirits, lovers of light, when they have an idea brood long over it first, and wait patiently until it *shines*." It is not everything which we have experienced and learned that constitutes our peculiar message; it is the group of ideas which stand out from the others as our very own, which have mastered us and made us theirs. Of course we shall have to speak of many things besides; but we shall say these other things differently. The part of our spoken words which will tell, is that part which has "shone" for us. "You may do what you like," says Joubert again; "mankind will believe no one but God, and he only can persuade mankind who believes that God has spoken to him." The present analysis is an attempt to show the method by which God speaks to us.

But, it may be asked, will this sort of message be in-

fallibly accurate? The word "infallible" is a dangerous word. It has to reckon with personal idiosyncrasy, with many prejudices in the fairest mind and many obscurations in the clearest thought. Each of us must think and speak within his own limitations, and nothing that we say can claim infallibility. Yet in the main such vision will be sufficiently accurate, and all true prophets will have at least some visions in common. In our interpretations of human life we may be sure of reaching the same general ethical results—unless, indeed, a man has perverted his judgment with bad reading, or his experience with dalliance. In the long result, further experience of life will, so far at least, bring him round to truth from whatever errors may have misled him. In interpretations of God and the higher spiritual truths there will be less uniformity. "It is not hard to know God, provided one will not force oneself to define Him."[1] The trouble lies in the attempted definition. All our doctrines are necessarily very inadequate expressions of the realities they seek to define, and the more we bear this in mind the less we shall either expect or desire exact uniformity of statement. Even the prophets of the Bible differed widely from one another in their expressions of the same truths, and two preachers may still be both of them truly prophetic men, though they utter very different oracles: but there will be truth enough in any genuinely prophetic message to bring conviction to some of those who hear, and that is enough. The days of meticulous uniformity are over, and the large comprehensiveness of truth is beginning to temper the dogmatism of the modern prophet.

(4) There is one thing more in the full equipment of the prophet, and that is his *call*. Vision by itself does not constitute a call. A man may find certain groups of ideas rise within him to such brilliance as to assume the absolute mastery over his life, and to become "the light of all

[1] Joubert.

his seeing," and yet he may feel no call to proclaim those ideas to others. The vision of Lazarus in Robert Browning's *Karshish* will occur to many of you in illustration: It is sometimes difficult to understand how it can be possible for a man to feel no call to preach, considering the nature of the revelations by whose light his spirit is living. Yet we must accept the fact that it is sometimes so; and, after all is said, it is a matter between the man and God. For this whole subject I would recommend to your careful reading the "Brief Account of the Author's Call to the Work of the Ministry" which John Bunyan appends to his *Grace Abounding.*

A vision becomes a call only when there comes upon the man who has received it a passionate desire to impart it to others. It is when vision becomes imperative, when a man must either speak out or break his heart, when he cannot be content with holding convictions but must strive to make them the convictions of others, that his call has come. I venture to put this even more strongly. It is common in the Old Testament to read that "the Lord spake by" this or that prophet; and if the view which we are advocating in this lecture is correct, the words are applicable still. That would imply that no man has a right to preach unless he cannot help preaching, until he has definitely received the command of the Lord to preach. I believe that very many preachers, men who love their profession dearly, would nevertheless be out of it to-morrow if they could. It is such awful work, this daily handling the souls of one's fellow-creatures, that it is difficult to see how any man could face it except under irresistible compulsion. But so long as the call is clear to a man, he dare not quit his post. He should look upon it, not so much as one general call to accept the office of the ministry, but rather as a daily repeated demand for the utterance of successive messages. The original call, at whose summons he first becomes a preacher, will be apt

to recede into the background of his ministry, and to be heard more and more faintly, as an echo of young enthusiasms of former days. This loss of the sense of solemnity must be avoided at all costs. The call should be heard, in all its awfulness of authority, summoning the preacher forth to every utterance he delivers. Sometimes it may urge him to send forth a purely intellectual message, giving a truth to the world. More frequently it will be ethical and spiritual, urging men from sin to goodness, from worldliness to faith. In any case, it is for the preacher a grim necessity and a heavy burden, laid upon him by his conscience. He cannot leave men or women in error when it is possible for him to set them right, nor can he sit by and see sin done, when, by speaking out, he could get goodness attempted.

I have told you very frankly what life has led me to think about this obscure and very serious matter, of knowing whether one is a genuine prophet or not. It is rendered still more perplexing by the universal difficulty which men find in forming a just and accurate estimate of their own motives. There may be unsuspected elements of vanity, the desire to be conspicuous or the ambition to be great; there may be natural powers of public speech, or the inherited tendency towards preaching which runs in the very blood of some nations. An earnestly conscientious man may find himself well-nigh baffled in his attempts to distinguish between these and the higher motives that draw him towards the office of the preacher. The true sources of guidance are as mysterious as the situation is perplexing, and it would be highly presumptuous to attempt any strict analysis of the movements of the Spirit of God upon the heart of a man. Yet there is one general principle which seems sound and helpful. It is this, that when the supposed call comes before the message—when it is but a general desire to prophesy, apart from any particular thing the man wants to say—it is to

be distrusted. When, on the other hand, the call comes after the message—when truths have arisen from experience and study into ardent visions, which now clamour in a man's conscience for utterance—then he may recognise the call as God's purpose for his service, bow his head, and reverently obey.

Yet forgive me if I once more repeat that these elements of vision and call are absolutely indispensable to an assured and satisfying conscience of fitness in any minister. At the beginning there is all the excitement of the new adventure, and while that lasts no judgment can be passed. But as the years go by, things settle down, and we come to know how it is with us. There are two sorts of preacher in our pulpits to-day. There is the prophet who goes there to speak forth in God's name a thing concerning which he dares not keep silent, and there is the poor clerical hack who preaches because Sunday has come round again. It has been truly said that the ministry is the most honourable of professions and the most dishonourable of trades. It would be better to "be a cat and cry mew" than to preach without being called.

2. *The prophet and his audience.* Every prophet must speak with authority and not as the scribes. What is the nature of this authority, and what are its secrets? In the main it is of a twofold character. It springs partly from a sense of sympathy between the preacher and those who hear him; partly from a certain aloofness in which he stands among them. In order to interpret for a man his spiritual world, you must understand the man closely, but you must also understand the spiritual world better than he does. Much of this ground we have gone over in considering the preacher as priest, but it is necessary also to deal with it in the light of the prophetic ideal.

(1) On the subject of sympathy, little need be added to what has been already said. Sympathy is one of the main qualities of the priestly office, and has been dwelt on at

considerable length in that connection. It needs only to be added that sympathy will also prove one of the chief secrets of the prophet's authority. In our pastoral visitation and otherwise we are always gathering information and forming judgments about the people to whom we are to preach. The result of this, if our mingling with them has been sympathetic, will be to establish within our minds a fairly distinct conception of various types of character into which we unconsciously group our people; and we shall find ourselves habitually preaching to one or other of such types. This will be of high service to our preaching, for it will break up those masses in which men shelter their consciences from personal conviction. Under no circumstances, and on no pretext whatsoever, is it permissible for any preacher to single out one individual in his congregation and preach at him. But, as has been said with great insight, "effective preaching makes men hear as individuals."[1] In this way, by preaching to the type without conscious reference to the individual, we may avoid the doom against which Dr. Whyte has warned us, of finding at the last our communion-roll a millstone about our neck.[2] It is extraordinary how individually men and women will receive and interpret the preaching of a truly sympathetic minister, and how often they will tell him that it had seemed as if he had spoken for themselves alone. Such preaching, other things being equal, is likely to be highly successful.

It may not, however, be successful in the sense of attracting a great audience. Its success will lie in the response which it awakens in the audience which it does attract. Remember what you are doing. You are interpreting a certain number of people to themselves. You are showing them in clear light, spiritual things which they have felt vaguely and confusedly. There is a

[1] Macphail, *Epistle to the Colossians*, p. 53.
[2] *Bunyan Characters*, i. 153.

prophetic element in the hearer which answers to the voice of every true prophet, deep calling unto deep. If it be true that God never leaves any of His children without a witness in their souls to Himself, then you may count upon men recognising God when they are confronted with Him. In hearers who are religiously inclined, this response is natural and may be expected. But it may be expected also in the children of the world. Beneath all their hardness or frivolity there lie the memories of old spiritual enthusiasms, or the shames of half-forgotten sins. Depend upon it, men can bury their spiritual dead but in shallow graves within them, and at the voice of the prophet these dead will come forth.

But it must also be borne in mind that this very element of sympathy will alienate those whom it does not attract. One man's prophet is not the prophet for another man, and the sympathetic elements in every prophet will segregate men like Judgment Day. Thus the very fact of the close spiritual affinity between the prophet and the souls which he interprets will narrow his audience and diminish it. The cautious preacher of generalities and platitudes will in some cases have the larger congregation, and he will certainly offend and alienate fewer people. It is true that any prophet who deals with the central concerns of the human spirit will say some things which appeal to all. But one must remember that all do not want to be appealed to. There are some who desire nothing less than any interpretation of their deeper life. And, besides that, the personality, tastes, and cast of mind of the prophet must necessarily determine the limits of his audience. We need not close our eyes to the fact that each of us has so many of our fellow-men whom we naturally attract, and so many whom we repel.

Hence the audience will change. Some will come; others will drop away. It is foolish as well as wrong to alienate anyone recklessly or unfeelingly. Yet the

changes in the audience need not discourage any genuinely sympathetic preacher. He should rather rejoice in it, for those who go will probably receive more edification under another ministry, and their departure will leave him more exclusively among those to whom he is indeed a prophet. There is a great deal of unintelligent vexation spent upon such losses in congregations. It is no crime in a man that he finds another preacher more helpful than you or me. We cannot do prophetic work and still remain inoffensive to everybody. The lesson of it all undoubtedly is that each of us should specialise rather than seek to be of universal popularity. We should sharpen and concentrate our message rather than try to adapt it to the general taste, and should fortify ourselves with the remembrance of the Master's words, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."

A few words may be said here upon the subject of the criticisms which all ministers must expect to be passed upon their preaching. "We move unconsciously among a network of opinions, often quite erroneous, which other people entertain about us." Now and again we are reminded of this by a letter or a personal attack in conversation. We had been thinking of the world as a friendly place, and it is as if the light had faded and all the geniality had gone out of it. If we are sensitive, we may even come to imagine ourselves surrounded by enemies, and chilled by their unkindly presence. Such sensitiveness must be resolutely dealt with if we are to preserve our serenity of mind, and replaced by counter-criticism of our critics, which will judge their opinions in such a spirit as will be fair both to them and to ourselves.

Anonymous letters should give us least concern. Many of them may be dismissed at once and need not give us another thought. We cannot expect to derive much wisdom from cowards. Yet now and then, among the hun-

dreds of such letters which I have received, I have found a valuable suggestion or discovered a fault of which I had been quite unconscious. Once or twice a stinging anonymous attack has led to a deep and abiding friendship. For the rest, I cannot say that you will derive much benefit from your critics. Some of their opinions you can discard at once, as being obviously but the expression of personal preferences for one sermon or opinion or phrase as against another; and sometimes the disparaged bit of work will afterwards turn out to have been helpful to someone else who heard it. Usually the real meaning of the blame is that the critic has not found that particular message personally congenial. This may be extremely helpful. After all, the critic is not there for our sakes: we are there for his. Again, one must ask in every such case whether the critic is competent to judge us on that particular matter. If he is, his view is always worth considering; if not, we need not spend time on it. I remember once receiving a severe rebuke for the floridity of a speech I had delivered, from someone who had taken the pains to stroke out in the newspaper report the parts which he considered superfluous. He had stroked out almost everything I really wanted to say, and what he had allowed to remain would not have been listened to by any human being for five minutes. When a critic is spiteful and abusive, there must be a reason for it, and it is not well to allow resentment to embitter us in such a case. Probably the cruel words are but the expression of an unhappy spirit, whose misery should only move us to pity and to seek to help the pain. I suppose most preachers will be sometimes accused of "not preaching the gospel." It is a serious accusation, and it may be deserved. On the other hand, there are some critics whose narrow and unintelligent attachment to a stereotyped form of words, prevents them from recognising the gospel when they hear it.

It is a great thing to learn to accept criticism gracefully, and to extract from it all the aid we can. If a man helps you to preach better, he has done you a benefit, even though in doing it he may have wounded you. Forget the personal affront to your infallibility, and judge the case as if it were the criticism of someone else's work. But whatever you do, never allow any critic to deflect your essential message, or to make you timid about letting the light of your vision shine. That is none of his business; it is God's and your own. "They say—What say they?—Let them say!"

We have seen that sympathy with men is an essential element in the prophet's authority over them. No authority is so impressive as that which is backed by sympathy. The best example of this is Jesus Christ Himself, whose whole life was so broadly human, and yet whose authority was felt to be so terrible when it flashed out in scorn and anger upon wickedness in the high places of His day, or when His love laid its commands upon the disciples. In far-off and dim reflection of that wondrous life, we may see in every prophet in his small degree a similar proof that sympathy may be the source and not the negation of authority. When men perceive one among them, who manifestly loves them and whom they love, to be a prophet, they see the lines of right and wrong in clearer light and sharper edge. He, above all other men, has the power to enlist their conscience and their reason upon his side, winning them through their affections.

(2) Yet there is an element of danger in this sympathetic ideal. In wise sympathy the prophet will always retain a certain aloofness. If he so bears himself that the chief impression he makes on men is that of boisterous joviality in which there is no trace of dignity left, he will undoubtedly lessen that authority which is his by right of his office. Sir Walter Scott used to tell a curious story of one Huives, valet to William Stuart Rose. Rose had

found him as a preacher, preaching under a tree in the New Forest. "The sermon contained such touches of good feeling and broad humour that Rose promoted the preacher to be his valet on the spot." In this there is a world of suggestion. Huives was not the only preacher who has been promoted to be somebody's valet. Everyone who has allowed the fear of men to modify the message that he had from God, is of that inglorious company. To avoid the disapproval of the influential, to secure the favour of the general crowd, preachers of the poorer sort are tempted to tamper with whatever vision God may have given them.

The temptation comes upon nobler minds in the subtler form of fear *for* men. You may be afraid of losing touch with them and influence over them, of being misunderstood and so unwittingly leading them into danger, of shaking their faith, of a thousand other things. And so they will become your masters and your patrons, and God's truth will be robbed of its force, by a nervous imagination of its possible bad effects. It is not worthy of God's prophet to act so; and it is as futile as it is unworthy. Any experienced preacher will tell you that offence has seldom been given by the passages he was afraid to utter, but almost invariably by passages in which he never dreamed of it. Of course I am speaking as to wise men, and not to fools. To be deliberately offensive, or regardless of the feelings of those one addresses, is the mark not of the faithful but of the underbred preacher. But the message which God commits to His ministers must not be first submitted to the censorship of all imaginable objectors. "Ye are bought with a price; become not slaves of men."

The praise of men is to be regarded with the same indifference. Sometimes, indeed, the praise of men may be a very precious gift of God. When a man tells you that your words have gone home to his conscience or

blessed his soul, there is little danger in such praise. The preacher's work is often very lonely and discouraging, and none of us can afford to despise the gratitude of any honest friend or hearer. We would all preach better if it were more freely given. Sometimes, in the commendation we receive, we may even discover a very useful rebuke. I remember an old man long ago contrasting my sermons with those of an evangelist in a neighbouring tent. He said, "In the tent they aye say 'You,' but when ye're preachin' ye say 'We.'" The shrewd judgment, intended for approbation, led to a change in my use of personal pronouns for which I have often thanked the old friend of my young days. But there is another kind of praise, and it is deadly poison. John Bunyan knew it, and answered one who complimented him on his "sweet sermon," by the rejoinder, "You need not remind me of that. The devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit."[1] There is in many of us an inveterate egotism which hungers for praise without much fastidiousness or discrimination. This may persist even after years of repeated humiliations which have exposed our vanity and made us ashamed of it. I would advise you to read the fourth chapter of Hatch's *Hibbert Lectures,* in which he holds up the mirror to this in his accounts of Greek and early Christian orators. If your reading of it affects you as it affected me, you will go forth from that chapter feeling rather sick, and very definitely determined to stamp out any traces of this evil passion you may find within you. "How many have been the worse for having their virtue known and over hastily recommended!"[2]

The fear of men, and the inordinate desire for their praise, are but different aspects of that self-consciousness which is the preacher's greatest enemy. First and last we ourselves are too much in evidence, and we must learn

[1] Froude, *Bunyan,* p. 180.

[2] Thomas à Kempis, *Imitatio Christi,* bk. iii., ch. xlvii.

to keep ourselves more out of the picture. We are sensitive not only to the praise and blame of others, but to the visible results of our preaching, and that is the subtlest of all forms of egotism. We grow downcast under the sense of failure and over-anxious for visible success. But the greater part of our success and failure we can never see. We know that quite well, and still we remain oversensitive. So we must learn to force ourselves back from self and from men's opinions of us, and to fix our gaze steadily on the vision that was given us for our message. At least we have heard and seen, and we must school ourselves to be content with that. By doing so we shall gain authority. Every time men see in their prophet such weaknesses as those we have been considering, will make him less of a prophet for them. But if they see that he is independent of them, and invulnerable either to their praise or blame—that he so feels the reality of his message as to shrink neither from its consequences in popularity, nor from the humiliation of his own imperfect delivery of it—they will feel his grasp tighten upon their souls. Let him take high ground as to his authority, and charge them with the responsibility for their treatment of a prophetic message. Let him be daring, and speak out without *arrière pensée,* and he can do what he will with men. Let him speak as the oracle of God Almighty, and he may count on a very general acceptance of his authority, in virtue of that mystic office. If he were only a private man and friend expressing an opinion, the crowd would speedily overwhelm him. But there are moments of exaltation when even the populace has been made to feel the superiority of God to Mammon, the empire of soul over flesh. These are the moments in which the prophet reaches his triumph.

From all this it will appear that, in spite of all his sympathy, there is an aloofness which is inseparable from the prophet's work. In former days this aloofness was

regarded as incompatible with sympathy. Thomas à Kempis tells us that the priest's "life and conversation should not be in the popular and common ways of mankind, but with the Angels in Heaven, or with the perfect upon earth."[1] A modern exponent has stated the position still more strongly: "Nay, rather, life had shrouded him about with a purpose, and he who would save men must walk among them as an enemy, drawing his cloak about him, and fearing alike their lips and their hands."[2] It is an easier ideal, but a poorer one. We risk more than those who cherish it, but we play for a higher stake. The authority to which we aspire is a very subtle and complex thing. It draws its force both from our nearness to the hearts of men, and from a certain indefinable separation involved in the prophet's calling. We would be partakers in the common life of humanity and yet initiates in the secret of the Lord.

Another source of authority lies in that obscure force commonly known as "personality." The prophet does not employ only his knowledge, or his experience, or even his vision, in his work upon those to whom he speaks. He, like the orator, the actor, and the writer, must also employ *himself*. "There are some to whom nothing has any real interest, or real meaning, except as operative in a given person; and it is they who best appreciate the quality of soul in literary art."[3] Personality in prophetic preaching is to a certain extent a magnetic force—whatever that may mean. It may operate in sheer fascination, which is always unhealthy and sometimes positively sensuous, but it may also be a perfectly pure and wholesome force. It is a force upon which every prophet must count for authority over those to whom he preaches, frankly accepting the fact that he is not offering them bare truth,

[1] *Imitatio Christi,* bk. iv., ch. v.
[2] Max Pemberton, *The Mystery of the Green Heart.*
[3] Walter Pater, *Appreciations,* p. 24.

nor even his own sense of truth, but truth with himself thrown in as a second element in the gift. The difficult problem will be to avoid such prominence of the personal element as will overshadow or usurp the effect of the message; and yet to blend one's own personality with the message so that the truth may come to those who hear it, invested with whatever personal attractiveness the preacher may possess.

Personal attraction or magnetism is of course a thing quite beyond the reach of definition; if we could succeed in analysing it, we would by doing so destroy it. No small part of its power lies in its elusiveness, and in such matters the wise are always reticent, leaving a certain amount of mystery to give atmosphere to all their human relations. Of course, as we have already seen, sympathy has to do with it, although that is by no means the whole of its secret. We have all known persons of overflowing sympathy, who never could succeed in making themselves impressive, or even welcome, to others. Aloofness has quite as much to do with this strange power. In all strong personal force there is a certain element of mastery, more or less concealed. The prophet must believe in himself and in his message. He must trust his own experience of receiving it as a vision direct from God, and must send it forth as a word which has the right to command. I believe that congregations desire their preachers to take high ground, and to speak with authority. There is no more fatal habit than the not uncommon one of punctuating one's message with the modest word "perhaps." It is not incumbent upon us to soften down the word of God to suit the taste of a refined audience. We used to be warned by wise teachers of the older Scottish school not to pray, "Thou chargest Thine angels with comparative folly," nor to preach that "he who, so to speak, believeth not shall, as it were, be damned." Arm your personality with the

armour of certainty, and let it go free, strenuous and unhesitating. Let it be the personality of an athlete of the spirit, who has wrestled in meditation and made up his mind in the sweat of his brow. Such a personality will be well worth sending forth.

For, after all, the only use of personality in preaching is to reinforce and impress the truth for which it stands. Any personal influence or attraction which comes between that truth and the consciences and hearts of men, is wholly mischievous, and must be got rid of. It is the truth which really matters, and not the preacher. In the last analysis their true prophet is not the man whom men admire, or like, or agree with. He is the man who has been able to set them face to face with what they recognised to be God's truth, and who has left them for that truth to do its work upon them. Whether, in John Knox's rugged phrase, he "lift them up, or beat them down," his authority must depend largely on the answer to his message in their hearts. The spiritual is the real, and the most impressive prophet is he who has laid hold on the reality of spiritual things. If a man feels the grip of your hand upon his conscience, if by the things you say you clear up for him regions of uncertainty into evident and commanding truth, he will not grudge to own your mastery. The higher the revelation, the more absolute will be the prophet's authority; for even the spirits that live and think on low ground, chafe at times against their lowness, and know that the heights are better. Live, think, work on high levels, and those whose lives you interpret will bow before an authority they cannot question.

In this final lecture almost nothing has been said about the war. The reason is that the subject of it is so entirely and vitally relevant, that it may be said to have been connected with the war from first to last. Wars, like pestilences, have in the past very frequently pro-

duced prophets. Great public calamities always bring men down to bed-rock reality, and the prophet is the voice of reality. In times of peace many prophets are spoiled by being deflected into politicians, journalists, or rhetoricians. In time of war, party ends are merged, newspapers lay down their journalese and pulpits their rhetoric, and together we all face reality. That return to reality is the main argument of these lectures, and in the preacher as prophet it reaches its climax and summing-up. The prophet is the highest type of such preaching as is required for this generation.

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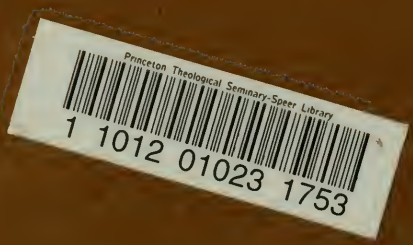
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